WOMEN OF THE BIBLE

DR. H. A. THOMPSON

Women of the Bible

— Consisting of —

Biographical and Descriptive Sketches

— of the —

Representative and More Important Women of Old Testament and New Testament Times, as Viewed in the Light of our Present Day Civilization

By

H. A. THOMPSON, D.D., LL.D.

Editor of "The United Brethren Review," Author of "Schools of the Prophets," "Power of the Invisible," "Our Bishops," etc.

With an Introduction by

REV. HENRIETTA G. MOORE

ILLUSTRATED WITH ORIGINAL ENGRAVINGS

"Not she with trait'rous kiss her Savior stung,
Not she denied him with unholy tongue;
She, while apostles shrank, could danger brave,
Last at the cross, and earliest at his grave."

—*Barrett.*

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TO MY SISTERS

MARTHA THOMPSON

AND

LYDIA T. HORLACHER

THE FORMER IN HEAVEN, THE LATTER YET ON EARTH,

IS THIS

TRIBUTE TO WOMEN

MOST AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED

"And yet, dear heart, remembering thee,
Am I not richer than of old?
Safe in thy immortality,
What change can reach the wealth I hold?

"And when the sunset gates unbar
Shall I not see thee waiting stand,
And white against the evening star,
The welcome of thy beckoning hand?"
—*Whittier.*

"It has often seemed to the writer, that no greater service could be done to a large class of the community, than to reproduce the sacred narrative, under the aspects which it presents to an imaginative mind, with the applications of geographical, historical, and critical knowledge."

—*Harriet Beecher Stowe.*

"We shall come in the future to teach almost entirely by biography. We shall begin with the life which is most familiar to us, the life of Christ, and we shall more and more put before our children, the great examples of persons' lives, so that they shall have from the beginning, heroes as friends in their thoughts."

—*Dr. Jowett.*

Foreword

IT is said the preface is the last part of the book that is written and this is usually done when the rest of the book is in type. I have word from the printer that this must be furnished at once. Why did I write this book? When I was in the midst of the work, I could easily have told, but can I now when the excitement of authorship has passed away?

When I came into the Church of which I am at present a member, there was a religious paper published which made its weekly visits, but very little book literature. But books are just as necessary as papers. They meet wants that papers cannot meet. You want them on your center table to be taken up at intervals, to be turned over when not specially busy; you want them for reading, for study, for inspiration; for the boys and girls to read on Sunday afternoons, or during the long winter evenings, when the doors are shut and the curtains down; for fathers and mothers who want to interest their children in the best of all literature, the life stories of men and women who have done their part in the world's work.

Some one has said that "what the boy reads (and it is just as true of girls) determines the fiber of the man. Ruskin, a boy of four years, lay on the floor on his stomach and read the Bible by the hour. Carlyle knew the scriptures from his mother's lips before he was able to read; and Gladstone knew the stories of Noah, Abraham, Jacob, and Joseph ere he knew the paths about his father's estate." What you want to appear in the after years of the young, must be gotten unto their minds when the avenues to knowledge are all open, and there is a keen desire for information.

Having experienced this lack in my early years, it has been my hope, as far as a busy life would allow, to furnish something for the young people who should come after me, to quicken their love of their own church and make them more efficient workers in it. I could have done more perhaps had I been encouraged by Church authorities, but while I was anxious for a book literature for the

Church, they felt the need of making money, so there seemed at times to be an impassable gulf between us.

Then again my early life and training had not a little to do, maybe, in making me an earnest advocate for an equality of opportunities for women as well as for men. My mother had as much to do in forming my life tendencies as had my father, and in fact she was the stronger character of the two. My father was reared under Quaker influences which made him more friendly to the advanced education of his boys than to that of his girls. In their case the spending of money for higher education did not seem a wise investment. When I was old enough to go to college I was helped to go; my sister was kept at home, though anxious to go, and would have made as good and faithful a student as I could possibly be. This was the disappointment of her life and had no little influence in determining my life work. When it became my duty to manage a mixed college I determined to do what I could to fill up the ranks of students with a fair amount of girls. More than a few girls possess a college education because of the pressure I was enabled to bring upon fathers and mothers at home, who had not planned anything of that kind.

When I had a little leisure to write, it would not be strange if I should study the Bible a little more closely, to see what the Creator had in mind when he placed humanity upon the earth, male and female. What I found there and in history and have learned from observation I have sought to place before the reading public and especially the women of the land. Others have written of the men of the Bible; the women have not been entirely neglected, but have not been given their exalted place. I have not written for the scholar or the critic, but for the common people with the hope that what these women have been and done, under the hindrances of a benighted world sentiment, may inspire many other women, under the increased blessing of our Christian civilization, to do and dare much more for their sex, the Church and the race.

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Introduction

THE important part enacted by the women of the Bible has never been sufficiently accentuated in other records of those characters and deeds which shaped the destiny of those times. The reason of this neglect is undoubtedly because men have always been busy in the making and detailing of the history of their own worth and achievements, and women have been indolent in their acquiescence to the traditional idea of their inferiority and comfortable in their forbearance with an unnatural obedience to "keep silence" before men self-ordained to authority over them. But, in process of time, nature, in the mental as well as in the physical world, restores conditions to a happier and more harmonious state. In accordance therefore, with such evolution, the times are ripening, the history of the just recognition of woman's helps and hindrances to the progress of the race. Hence, it is not surprising that a good man should give to the people of the present and future the history on the pages of this book of those women who figured conspicuously in the events which took place in the days of the beginnings of peoples and institutions. He thus shows himself a man of the times obediently answering to the voice of the present.

Of all women to be immortalized, of all women to whom an after-age should bring gratitude, are the women who had the personality and the greatness to rise above the ignorance and superstition evidenced in custom, and the oppression defined in law and make themselves famous as mothers, and needful and useful women in early political rule and in the early Christian ministry. Among the women of the Bible the majority are of that type, and the women of this day, in their advanced position should accord honor and praise to the biographer who has brought to light so many facts in their characters and lives, as to reveal the truth that woman is true to her nature and to her opportunities in every age, the helper of man and his equal, a human

quantity, a human number, a human being, possessed of human passions, desires, rights, duties and privileges.

Only a man with a large sense of justice and a belief in human beings as human beings, would have given himself to such a task of research and delineation. His closing tribute to woman in comparing her status in the past and her status secured under the influence and power of Christianity, is a piece of choice literature, a bit of poetic prose, a chapter of incalculable value and inspiration.

The religion of law taught the master to free in the seventh year the slave who had served him six years and to send him away, but if he had married during the six years of servitude, his *wife* and *children* should remain in bond to the master. The religion of law taught that if a man sold his daughter to be a maid-servant, she should not go out free in the seventh year as the men-servants did. Thus the religion of law was made to justify slavery, and the greater oppression and subjection of woman. But Doctor Thompson emphasizes the fact that the religion of Christ teaches that "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female, for all are one in Him"—and that any law or teaching, any custom or prejudice, which separates men and women, which tends to make man a tyrant and woman a slave; any tradition or superstition, any legislation or legacy, which refers men and women to different spheres of thought and purpose, and classifies them upon different planes of soul and mind, contradicts the great work of Him who created this wonderful world for the two, and the two for this wonderful world, to live and grow, side by side, until the perfect whole is come.

Christ was woman's truest, tenderest and greatest friend, and her advancement has been made proportionately with the spread and understanding of his gospel. It was a heathen idea of the early centuries that woman was made for the house. It is the Christian idea that she was made for the home, that man was made for the home is equally true. The two were created to make the home the most sacred spot on earth. But that does not imply confinement to the house neither for the woman nor the man. That idea originated in the harem of the East, in the day of the veiled slave, in the day of the universal degradation and prostitution of woman. The idea still clung to such as Tertullian, who, in the

third century, as the rigid leader of the Christians, enforced the wearing of veils by all women, and declared that God had revealed to men just what the dimensions of the veil should be. But the Christ idea is lifting men and women to meet upon the same high level of liberty, unity and activity.

The book has been written from an altitude of fair and broad-mindedness. It is profitable for all readers. It is history that entertains and instructs. It gives us a new acquaintance with the character and career of Deborah, who was so wise a ruler in ancient Israel, and so potent a commander-in-chief of the army that she maintained the only forty years of peace mentioned in that nation that was war-swept so often. The song of Judge Deborah and her friend Barak after their great victory by the river Kishon, contains the most striking grandeur of verse and inscribes her as a most remarkable woman of her time. What figures of speech, what eloquence of thanksgiving, what loftiness of poetry in such expressions as: "Lord, when thou wentest out of Seir, when thou marchedst out of the field of Edom, the earth trembled, and the heavens dropped, the clouds also dropped water." "Awake, awake, Deborah: awake, awake, utter a song; arise, Barak, and lead thy captivity captive." "They fought from heaven; the stars in their courses fought against Sisera."

We are glad to know all that the writer has learned of Ruth, whose decision to forsake her own country and her own people, and to live and die with her mother-in-law is the sublimity of duty and affection, of loyalty and constancy. And of young Esther, whose heroism manifested to the risking of the displeasure of her king and husband, and of her own life for the salvation of her imperiled people has no parallel in the annals of moral fortitude, patriotism and affection. Miriam, serving jointly with Moses and Aaron as a political leader, becomes a more conspicuous woman of her day as defined by the pen of this writer. Huldah, dwelling in the college at Jerusalem, the chief public counselor of the high-priest and the king, a preacher and a prophet herself, becomes a woman of more worth and inspiration to us from her history recorded herein.

But the pure spiritual religion of Jesus commanded, encouraged and inspired women to become especially active in the ministry, and we are grateful for the enlarged record of Priscilla who was as much of a *diakonos,* apostle or evangelist as Aquila,

and was more commended for her work than was Aquila. There is excellent data for believing that Priscilla, with Aquila's help, alone organized the Church of Rome. She was the instructor of Apollos, teaching him "the way of God more perfectly." Christian women will be stimulated by the greater knowledge of what Phœbe did in the early ministry, she whom Paul warmly acknowledged as the servant or minister of the church at Cenchrea. And of Mary, Claudia, Julia and others commended of Paul as women who had distinguished themselves in apostolic work or in joint ministry with himself and others.

May this book go forth on its mission of enlightenment and hasten the day when justice shall be enthroned in human lives, and the souls of men and women shall be transfigured by the power of right, and all human voices shall be blended in the peace and good-will chorus of the angels, and immortal love become the inspiration of all humanity and the consummation of all divinity.

HENRIETTA G. MOORE.

Springfield, Ohio.

Old Testament Women

Eve---the Mother of Mankind

"Grace was in all her steps, heaven in her eye,
In every gesture dignity and love."

—*Milton.*

"An angel, wandering out of heaven,
And all too bright for Eden even,
Once through the path of Paradise
Made luminous the auroral air;
And, walking in his awful guise,
Met the Eternal Father there;
Who, when he saw the truant sprite,
Smiled love through all those bowers of light.
While deep within her trancèd spell,
Our Eden sire lay slumbering near,
God saw, and said, 'It is not well
For man alone to linger here.'
Then took that angel by the hand,
And with a kiss its brow he pressed,
And whispering all his mild command,
He laid it on the sleeper's breast;
With earth enough to make it human,
He chained its wings, and called it WOMAN.
And if perchance some stains of rust
Upon her pinions yet remain,
'Tis but the mark of God's own dust,
The earth-mold of that Eden chain."

—*T. Buchanan Read.*

Eve—the Mother of Mankind

WHATEVER men may think or say of the Bible account of man's origin, it is the only account of his being which is in keeping with the high conception of his value which is taught elsewhere in the same book. No other record of his origin is worthy of a being of such wonderful power and so grand a destiny. Apart from Scripture teachings, men have had no adequate conception of the real dignity belonging to their nature. "The Greeks, though inquisitive, aspiring and bold in their speculation, ascribed no glory to that nature from any divine energy concerned in forming it. Its origin confessedly lay hid in the 'dark backward and abyss of time'; as Plato said, 'The human soul either had no beginning at all and never will have an end, but always will be and has been, or it had a beginning an immense time ago.' In the common understanding of things, man had sprung from the earth—an autochthon—and the grasshopper was his fitting badge. From rocks and trees and swampy places some had come, those born of the marsh having legs like serpents. Heroes had been earthborn, and even the gods themselves, according to Pindar, had drawn their breath from the same mother. The first men had lived as insignificant emmets in the excavated earth, or in the sunless depths of caverns, and Prometheus had first shown them the risings and settings of stars, had made known to them letters, numbers, and the function of memory, had also helped them to the ornaments of life."

In distinction from this unnatural and unphilosophical account of man's origin, we turn to the Scripture record. For ages possibly this earth had been in the course of preparation for the one who was to inhabit and have dominion over it.

"Now heaven in all her glory shone and roll'd
Her motions, as the first great Mover's hand
First wheeled their course; earth in her rich attire
Consummate, lovely, smiled; air, water, earth
By fowl, fish, beast, was flown, was swum, was walked
Frequent; and of the sixth day yet remained;
There wanted yet the Master work, the end
Of all yet done."

—*Milton.*

And so the record states, "And God said, Let us make man in our own image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and . . . so God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him."

This means that very high honor was put upon us in our creation. We are but the creatures of an hour, without the single promise of to-morrow, and yet in some parts of our nature we bear the impress of our divine Creator. This can hardly lie in the perpetuating of the human body, nor yet in his possession of reason, of thought, of invention, by which he is made a little lower than the angels, but must be in the moral attributes which he possesses. These may be made to reflect the character of the God who made us. By means of these we may come into a conscious knowledge of him, may be holy as he is holy, may learn to love him with something of the love which he bestowed on us. To love God and to love mankind is to be like God, to bear the image of him in whose image the first Adam was made. We are not, then, the production of the earth, living for a few hours and then to perish forever like the beasts of the field about us. We have royal blood in our veins, and are the children of the King of the universe.

Just where this first man was located we do not know. It was in the garden of Eden, sometimes called Paradise, from a Persian word meaning park or garden. The word "garden," however, is to be understood in no such limited sense as we use the word to-day. Men have anxiously inquired as to the exact location of the spot where the foot of the first man trod this earth, where the first woman appeared, where the first human marriage was consummated, and the first child born; that one spot where the animals were harmless and the air full of the richest and most invigorating perfumes; that one lone spot where for a brief time perfect innocence and purity prevailed. The place has been variously located. It has been sought in "Asia, in Europe, in Africa, in America, in Tartary, on the banks of the Ganges, in the Indies, in China, on the Island of Ceylon, in Armenia, Mesopotamia, Syria, Palestine, Ethiopia, the mountains of the moon, and the Arctic regions. Some place it on the rivers produced by the junction of the Euphrates and Tigris; others place it in Armenia

between the sources of the four rivers, Euphrates, Tigris, Araxes, and Phasis." The opinion that places it in Armenia has obtained the most general support and seems nearest the truth. It is probable the changes which have occurred on the surface of the earth since that time have placed the spot beyond discovery or recognition. Except as a matter of sentiment, it is doubtful if the location of the place could be of any practical value.

Wherever located, it must have been a delightful place, more interesting than any landscape which our earth could furnish today. In all probability here was some of the most magnificent scenery which the earth has ever exhibited, and that which excites the inquiries of an anxious mind was spread out before him. This first man had to dress the landscape and keep it, but he had plenty of time to study God through his works and had communion with him. The birds sang melodious songs in his ears, and the beasts of the field played about their ruler. He was the possessor of an immortal spirit; more strictly speaking, he was an immortal spirit, he was a holy and therefore a happy being. There was free and uninterrupted communion between himself and his Maker. To those of us who live in this sin-cursed world, who see until our hearts are sick the oppressions that are done under the sun, who in order to get our daily bread are cut off from the opportunities of the sunshine and from the green fields, who are surrounded hourly by temptations to wrongdoing, who groan under the burden of our cares and our sins, this would seem to have been a blessed condition, and no doubt it was. There is a more delightful location awaiting God's children hereafter.

In the face of all this wealth of beauty and enjoyment, the Lord said, "It is not good for man to be alone." That same God who has always been and still is planning for man's good, prepared to meet that want, but not by creating another man to keep him company, for when this was done one killed the other. As man had been created with powers and affections adapting him to social intercourse, God saw that it would not be conducive to his highest happiness, nor in keeping with the purpose of his creation, to keep him in solitude with none to share with him in the interchange of thought and feeling. With the nature which Adam possessed and which we all possess, it did not seem possible for him, even in Eden, to have been perfectly happy if left in absolute

loneliness; so, to meet this want, a suitable companion was provided for him. The original word describing this being is interpreted to mean "his *contrast, reflected image, his other self.*" To show him that of those things already created there was nothing suitable for his companionship, possibly the animals were made to pass before him and he gave them their names. All the males of the brute creation were supplied with suitable mates, but among all of them none had been found suitable for him. "All that he saw were fit to be his servants, none his companions. The same God that finds the want supplies it, not out of the earth which was the mother of man, not out of the inferior creatures which were the servants of man, but out of himself, for dearness, for equality. As man knew not when he was made, so shall he not know when his other self is made out of him, that the comfort might be greater which was seen before it was expected."

The Lord caused a deep sleep to come upon Adam. This may have been a kind of trance such as came upon the prophets when favored with visions and revelations from God. It is possible that in this condition without suffering any pain, he was conscious of the whole process of her formation.

"Mine eyes he closed, but open kept the cell
Of fancy, my internal sight; by which,
Abstract as in a trance, methought I saw
Though sleeping where I lay, I saw the shape
Still glorious before whom awake I stood;
Who, stooping, opened my left side and took
From thence a rib, with cordial spirits warm
And life blood streaming fresh; wide was the wound
But suddenly with flesh filled up and healed;
The rib he formed and fashioned with his hands;
Under his forming hands a creature grew,
Manlike but different sex, so lovely fair,
That what seemed fair in all the world, seemed now
Mean, or in her summed up, in her contained
And in her looks; which from that time infused
Sweetness into my heart, unfelt before."

Some have been disposed to cavil at this account of woman's creation, but there is nothing in the statements made to weaken our faith in revelation or in the wisdom of Him who "builded a woman." It is the plain statement of the divine Word, and we see no good reason why it should not be received as written. Some

have been disposed to consider the account as allegorical, thereby trying to remove the record of some apparent difficulties; but if we may so treat this, why may not the whole story of creation be treated as allegorical? How shall we determine what is allegorical and what real? What more difficulty in accepting as literal the creation of woman than the creation of man? Adam was formed of the dust of the earth, but he could as readily have been started into being by the fiat of the Almighty as by the process which was actually taken. God saw fit to take a different plan. So, in the case of the woman, he chose a method "which should serve vividly to impress upon the minds of men and women their peculiarly intimate relations to each other. In other creatures there was no natural connection between the pairs in the very act of creation. In theirs the sexes were created independently of each other; but in the man, the woman was to be of peculiar solemnity and significance; it was even to set forth as by a symbol the union between Christ and his Church."

Adam received with joy this new creation who was to be his intimate companion, "bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh."

"Till Hymen brought his love delighted hour,
There dwelt no joy in Eden's rosy bower;
In vain the viewless seraph lingering there
At starry midnight charmed the silent air;
In vain the wild bird carolled on the steep,
To hail the sun, slow wheeling from the deep;
In vain to soothe the solitary shade
Aerial notes in mingling measure played;
The summer wind that shook the spangled tree,
The whispering wave, the murmuring of the bee;
Still slowly passed the melancholy day.
And still the stranger wot not where to stray;
The world was sad, the garden was a wild,
And man, the hermit, sighed—till woman smiled!"

This new association was intended to be one of mutual tenderness and endearment. With such a companion, his equal in origin and immortality, even Paradise itself must have taken on a new glory. In addition to new affections which now began to manifest themselves more rapidly, causing them to find enjoyment in each other's company and mutual appreciation, they were both gifted with the power of understanding the wonderful world about them and the work which their Creator had just completed. "Sources of

what is now termed wisdom, that of books and men, were indeed unknown to our first parents, nor did they need them. In the wonders of creation, the tree, the herb, the flower, the gurgling river, the breezy winds—nay, from the mighty form of the largest beast to the structure of the tiniest leaf, the flow of the river to the globule of the dew which watered the face of the whole earth, there was enough to exalt and satisfy their mental powers, enough to excite emotions alike of wonder and admiration. Their communion with the angelic messengers of their benevolent Creator, their tidings of heaven and its hosts, must have excited the highest and purest pleasures of the imagination and so diversified and lightened the mental exercise of wisdom, which the probable and visible objects of creation so continually call forth."

How long this happy condition continued we do not know, but while it did last it must have exceeded anything of which we can now imagine. "Formed in the image of God with all their faculties perfect and their appetites in subjection, undisturbed by care and as yet unassailed by temptation, they walked with God as a man walks with his friend and enjoyed communion with heaven though their abode was upon earth. There was no cloud upon their understanding, no undue bias on their will, nothing immoderate in their affections." So far as external pleasures were concerned, they were surrounded by everything which could minister to their comfort. In his wisdom and justice he had endowed them with free will. While this brought with it very great pleasure and very high honor if properly used, it might be wrongfully directed and thus would be followed by great degradation. These created beings must be trained in habits of obedience by making right choices. "To have guarded him jealously from any temptation, to have surrounded him with naught but sources of pleasure and enjoyment and so call forth only the grateful and adoring faculties of the spirit, was not according to that divine and perfect economy of love and justice which characterized the dealings of the Creator with his creatures. It was deeper, dearer love to permit man to win his immortality, his eternal innocence, than to bestow them on him unsought and therefore less valued. They could be guilty of no crime, in the world's parlance so termed. They were the sole possessors of the newly created earth, in daily

communion with their Creator, and therefore in neither idolatry, blasphemy, Sabbath breaking, dishonoring of parents, murder, adultery, theft, false witness, or covetousness could they sin. God knew that all the crimes which might devastate the earth would spring from one alone—*disobedience*—and therefore was it that his infinite wisdom ordained that the trial of man's love and faith and virtue should simply be obedience to his will."

Now comes the saddest of all events in the life of this happy pair, an event which has been the forerunner and promoter of all the wretchedness, sorrow, and sin of the human race. We have no better explanation of the introduction of sin into the world, and to discredit this account involves us in multiplied contradictions. "If any part of this narrative be matter-of-fact, no part of it is allegorical. If the man be allegorical, his paradise is an allegorical garden, the trees in it allegorical trees, the rivers that watered it allegorical rivers, and thus we may ascend to the very beginning of creation and conclude at last that the heavens are allegorical heavens and the earth an allegorical earth. Thus the whole history of creation will be an allegory of which the real subject is not disclosed, and in this absurdity the whole scheme of allegory ends."

As Eve goes forth to enjoy life in the midst of the scenes by which she is surrounded, she finds the Creator has wonderfully prepared for her comfort. Of all the trees of that garden she may partake save one; if she eats of that tree, death will follow as the result. Whether at that stage in her history she had any well-defined conception of what that penalty meant, we do not know, but she knew it was penalty and therefore to be avoided. The tempter comes to her in the form of the serpent and tells her she shall not surely die. She had misunderstood the prohibition. "True indeed God had said it, but you cannot suppose he was really in earnest. He made use of this language merely as an expedient to keep you in awe. Do not give way to such unworthy thoughts of an infinitely kind and gracious being. Do not suppose that for so trivial an offense as eating a little fruit, he will doom you to perdition and thus suddenly destroy the most excellent work of his hands." He even goes further by telling her that "her eyes will be opened." Eve saw that the fruit was pleasant to the eyes,

and if the words of the serpent could be believed, it would give her a knowledge she did not possess before. In an evil hour she yielded to the temptation and did eat.

"So saying, her rash hand in evil hour
Forth reaching to the fruit, she plucked, she ate;
Earth felt the wound, and nature from her seat
Sighing through all her works gave signs of woe,
That all was lost. Back to the thicket slunk
The guilty serpent and well might; for Eve
Intent now wholly on her taste, naught else
Regarded; such delight till then, as seemed
In fruit, she never tasted; whether true
Or fancied so, through expectation high
Of knowledge; nor was godhead from her thoughts."

Not only did Eve thus become the first human sinner, but she in turn became the first human tempter. She proffers the fruit to her husband and induces him to eat. He saw that his wife had fallen and now, as her hand beckons him down the same abyss, he yields and they are both sinners. To what extent he was influenced by her and to what extent he did this of his own accord, we can only conjecture. The record seems to indicate that she gave to her husband with the hope and intent that he should participate with her in her crime. In Genesis 3:17, he is apparently condemned for yielding to the entreaties of his wife. So Paul (I. Timothy 2:14) says, "Adam was not deceived, but the woman, being deceived, was in the transgression." Milton accepts the same thought:

"She gave him of that fair, enticing fruit
With liberal hand; he scrupled not to eat
Against his better knowledge, not deceived
But fondly overcome with female charms.
Earth trembled from her entrails, as again
In pangs; and nature gave a second groan;
Sky lowered and muttering thunder, some sad drops
Wept, at completing of the mortal sin
Original."

And yet, with regard to both, it was their own free, unconstrained act. There was no compulsion in the case. No one could be blamed for this sad act but themselves, and there was no apology that could be made for them. By this free act of

HEAD OF EVE

theirs they lifted the gates which have let loose a flood of misery on our world. It is not in the power of the human mind to measure the untold evils which may trace their origin to this fountainhead. Let us not blame them too severely unless we are sure we could have done better under the same circumstances.

Their eyes were opened, as are the eyes of every one who for the first time is conscious of wrongdoing. They now have a perception of guilt. They now have an extended knowledge of good and evil. The voice of the Lord does not now come to them with the pleasing sound it did before. The presence which before had filled them with joy now produces dismay. They flee into the dark recesses of the garden with the hope of eluding the eye of him against whom they had sinned. But there is no place where the trembling sinner can conceal his person or his crimes from that all-seeing eye. Adam is not willing to confess his guilt, nor yet to deny it; so he puts the blame on the woman whom God had given him. The woman, following the example of her husband, blames the serpent for beguiling, and in a sense her accusation is true. These excuses, however, for they were nothing else, could not ward off the punishment which must follow. The sorrows of the woman shall be multiplied and she shall be in subjection to her husband. This was not a new enactment, but prophecy of the treatment which should come to her. The earth was to be cursed for man's sake, and with painful and exhausting labor should he eat the fruit of it.

When Eve was first brought to Adam, he named her Isha, the equivalent for woman; as *ish* means man, *isha* more properly means a female man. As she was a partaker of his nature she should in effect be called by his name. Enmity was to be put between her seed and the serpent's seed. In view of this, probably, Adam calls her Havah, meaning that she was to be the mother of all who should be born; or it may have been because she was to be the mother of a seed who should bruise the serpent's head, and thus by being the progenitor of Christ, would be the mother of all who should have spiritual life through him. President Edwards says of this change of name:

"It is remarkable that Adam had before given his wife another name, Isha, when she was first created and brought to him; but now, that on this occasion of the fall and what God had said upon

it, he changes her name and gives her a new name, Havah, *life,* because she was to be the mother of every one that has life, which would be exceedingly strange and unaccountable if all that he meant was that she was to be the mother of mankind. It is most probable that Adam would give Eve her name from that which was her greatest honor, since it is evident that he had respect to her honor in giving her this name. The name itself, Life, is honorable, and that which he mentions concerning her being the mother of every living one, is doubtless something he had respect to as honorable to her. Since he changed her name from regard to her honor, it is most likely he would signify it in that way which was her peculiar honor; but that was the most honorable of anything that ever happened or that ever would happen concerning her—that God said she should be the mother of *that seed* that should bruise the serpent's head. This was the greatest honor that God had conferred on her."

Although Eve had fallen from her high estate of innocence, and had experienced in her own nature the consciousness of wrongdoing, Eden was still her home. But now, for some good reason, this pair are driven out of Paradise and prohibited from returning. Adam must go forth to till the ground from which he was taken. Remembering what a home is to every woman's heart, it must have been a sad hour when Eve is turned out and the gates closed against her; and yet it was her own act that sent her out. No more shall she eat its luscious fruits, or look on its gorgeous flowers, or breathe its perfumed atmosphere, or enjoy its angelic associations. Well may that sorrowful, exiled woman, mother of us all, exclaim as she casts a last, lingering look at her former happy home, as she goes out with an agonizing heart into an untried world:

"O unexpected stroke, worse than of death!
Must I leave thee Paradise?—this land,
This native soil, these happy walks and shades,
Fit haunt of gods, where I had hoped to spend
Quiet, though sad, the respite of that day
That must be mortal to us both. O flowers,
That never will in other climate grow,
My early visitation and my last
At even, which I bred up with tender hand
From the first opening bud, and gave ye names,
Who now shall rear you to the sun, or rank

Your tribes, and water from the ambrosial fount?
Thee lastly, nuptial bower, by me adorned
With what to sight or smell was sweet, from thee
How shall I part, and whither wander up and down
Into a lower world, to this obscure
And wild? how shall I breathe in other air
Less pure, accustomed to immortal fruits?"

. . . . .

"They, looking back, all the eastern side beheld
Of Paradise, so late their happy seat,
Waved over by that flaming brand; the gate
With dreadful faces thronged and fiery arms.
Some natural tears they dropt, but wiped them soon;
The world was all before them, where to choose
Their place of rest, and Providence their guide.
They, hand in hand, with wandering steps and slow
Through Eden took their solitary way."

This unhappy pair are now out of Eden. It would be a matter of great gratification if we could have had a few words telling us something of their experiences during the first years after the fall, but the record is silent. We cannot but be interested in their history and question ourselves concerning their welfare. When judgment was pronounced upon them, they did not seem to be in a very repentant state of mind, and had they so remained, there would not have been much hope for them in this life nor in the one to come. Physical death came into the world by their transgression, yet this part of their penalty is not at once inflicted. The pledge, that the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head, intimates that a plan has been devised whereby their sin shall not work utter ruin. This pair might at once have been cut off, but would not such an act have rendered God's work of no effect? They are still to live for some time and replenish the earth with inhabitants, who, although born with evil natures, may yet escape everlasting destruction. Is it not probable that, as the days and years passed by, and they had time to meditate on their sad mistake, that they did finally repent, and that He, who made clothing of the skins of beasts and covered them therewith, instead of the twisted leaves which they had themselves made, did hear their cry of anguish and comfort their bereaved hearts? And if the flaming sword kept them out of the earthly Paradise, may we not have good reason to believe that when the allotted time of their earthly pilgrimage ended, the pearly gates were opened to them and they

were admitted, as the rest of us shall be, as repentant sinners saved by a Redeemer's blood? The poets seem to have looked in this direction. Adam, after some converse with Eve, says:

> "We need not fear
> To pass commodiously this life, sustained
> By Him with many comforts, till we end
> In dust our final rest and native home.
> What better can we do than, to the place
> Repairing where he judged us, prostrate fall
> Before him reverent, and there confess
> Humbly our faults and pardon beg, with tears
> Watering the ground and with our sighs the air
> Frequenting, sent from hearts contrite in sign
> Of sorrow unfeigned and humiliation meek?
> Undoubtedly he will relent and turn
> From his displeasure; in whose look serene,
> When angry most he seemed and most severe,
> What else but favor, grace, and mercy shone?"

It must have been a number of years after their expulsion from Eden before a child came to gladden this household. These would be years of toil and trial, of sadness and regret, and, let us hope, of peace and communion with the Most High. With the earth full of people and the relation of mother and child well understood, the advent of a child into a family, and especially the first child, is an event which makes the mother's heart beat for joy. How much more would such an event, the birth of the first human child, bring strange feelings to Eve's heart! It was all a strange mystery to her. This was not only the first to her, but the first child that had been born into the world, the first that had nestled upon a mother's heart, and the first that had felt the warmth of a mother's affection. It is not strange that she should attach great importance to such an event. As years had elapsed since their expulsion from the garden, they may have doubted whether any children should be given them, and have been perplexed as to how God's promise would be fulfilled. It is strange Eve did not name this first son for her husband, the only man she had ever known, but in her joy over her first-born she exclaims, "I have gotten a man from the Lord," and calls him Cain, meaning *possession*. She may have meant to indicate that she already had the conviction that this son was the promised being who should bruise the serpent's head. Yet it is hardly likely that she had any such

definite conception of this promise. Maybe this is simply a token that the promised one will sometime come, and so she gives a name which will be a testimony of her faith to all coming generations.

"This first of mothers, this first woman who had ever dandled a babe upon her knee or nourished it from her breast, would soon learn that her new relation was not without its anxieties and trials, and that it involved duties more numerous, perhaps, to one who had never known childhood herself but had at once leaped into the fullness of life, than to other women since her time. All her knowledge must have been founded on what she had observed in the animals about her, whose young became in a very short time active, frolicsome, and entertaining. This would not have prepared her to expect the long and helpless infancy of her new-born child, with the restraints which it imposed and the sedulous attention which it exacted, in all of which she, the sole woman upon the earth, had none of that aid from others which her daughters have always been able to obtain."

While Adam names the beasts of the field, Eve gives names to the children. How long after the first birth we do not know, but some time after, another son is born whom the mother calls Abel, *vanity, a vanishing vapor.* He may have been a delicate child, and because of his physical weakness, the mother may have supposed he would not last long; or it may be they were divinely overruled to give him a name which, after his death, seemed to carry with it a prophetic import; or it may be that Cain's boyhood was a source of discipline to her. He may have shown by the development of fierce passions, which afterwards culminated in the murder of his brother, that he could not be the promised seed, and hence it was very appropriate that their life of sorrow should find a fitting remembrance in the life of this son.

These lads either grew up with different tastes and hence selected different pursuits in life, or they were assigned these by their parents. Cain became a tiller of the soil, and Abel a keeper of sheep. These in themselves indicate a considerable degree of cultivation. These children were brought up to labor. More than this, they must have been religiously trained, for we find them offering sacrifices to God. The Lord favorably regarded Abel's, because no doubt offered in a religious spirit. Cain's offering was not so favorably received and he was angry. The reason given

for the same is "because his own works were evil and his brother's righteous." The mother must have seen the difference in disposition between these boys, and hence, while not turning away from Cain, she must have loved Abel with a tenderer love because around him would seem to gather all her hopes. Cain was angry not only because his Maker had rejected his offering, but, no doubt, was also enraged at his brother, because he seemed to be an object of divine complacency as well as of a mother's special love. "The excellency of Abel's character seemed only to add fuel to the flame. His virtues were his faults. So true is it that the wicked dislike the good for no other reason than their goodness; an awful argument of the deep depravity of our nature. Cain hated in his brother the divine image as much as he envied him the divine favor."

"And Cain talked with Abel." Possibly he kept up the appearance of friendliness and dissembled his hatred until the opportunity came when he could carry out the evil intents of his heart. Had he disclosed these, he would have put his brother on his guard, but by feigning affection he would allay all fears, and thus be aided in his wish. If it could have been the result of sudden wrath, while still criminally guilty, some apology could be made for him. But his crime seems to have been the result of treachery and premeditation, and thus its enormity is greatly increased. Cain had never seen a human being killed, and possibly in their quarrel may have struck him a blow without knowing what the result would be. If some such excuse as this could be found, it would lighten, to some extent, the enormity of the crime; but the whole story seems to show that he was envious of his brother, decoyed him into the open field, and, while professing friendship for him, brutally slew him, thus taking his brother's life and at the same time crushing the hearts of his parents. "Thus death began its ravages; and the first man that died, died a martyr for religion. Though his parents' hearts must have bled over the mangled remains of their son, yet they doubtless felt acuter pangs for living Cain than for dead Abel. He died in faith and from a sinner on earth became a saint in heaven. He was the first of the noble army of martyrs, the first of humankind who entered the abode of the blessed."

We may fancy it was a bright, sunshiny morning when this faithful son left home, the home he was never to see again, to perform his daily work in the fields. The mother sends him forth from the parental roof with a mother's goodwill and never for once thought, as she watched him disappear, that she should never look upon that form again until cold in death. That eldest brother, who should have been his example and protector, strikes him down through bitter, cruel envy. The brother who had never raised a hand against him is cold in death, the eyes are closed, the heart no longer beats, the life has gone out. Long hours pass by, the night is approaching, and still he comes not. Possibly the mother starts forth to meet him. Over the familiar path she wends her way, utterly unconscious of what awaits her. She sees something before her and as she draws near she recognizes the form of Abel, but it is motionless. She had never seen a dead human body and could not yet tell what this meant. She looks into his face and speaks to him, but he does not answer. She tries to arouse him if perchance he may have fallen asleep, but he awakens not. She finds the wound from which the life blood has been oozing out; what must have been the agony of that hour? This would have been a dreadful shock to those of us who have grown more or less familiar with scenes of wickedness, but how awful must it have been to that mother who had never looked upon such a scene before, to find that her son had been cruelly murdered, and that by his own brother!

What became of Abel's body? The record gives us no account, and yet there must have been some way of disposing of the corpse. It could not have been left to the beasts of the field or the birds of the air to devour. Such a conception is shocking to us in connection with our loved ones, and must have been as much so to that first mother who stood face to face with the first corpse. Steps would certainly have been taken to preserve it from this. If this were not necessary, the process of decomposition in a warm climate would have made it necessary to remove the body out of their sight. It could have been placed in a cave and the entrance to it closed as has been done very frequently since; stones may have been heaped upon it to conceal it from the natural eye, or a hole may have been digged in the ground. Whether it was buried by the parents or the murderer does not appear. There is a legend

which teaches the following: "The dog which had watched Abel's flocks guarded also his corpse, protecting it against beasts and birds of prey. Adam and Eve sat beside it and wept, not knowing what to do. But a raven whose friend had died said, 'I will go and teach Adam what to do with his son.' It dug a grave and laid the young raven in it. When Adam saw this, he said to Eve, 'Let us do the same with our child.' The Lord reverenced the raven, and no one is allowed therefore to harm their young; they have food in abundance, and their cry for rain is always heard."

"Can any woman, much less a mother, reflect on Eve's immeasurable agony, and yet pass lightly and heedlessly over this first narrative of Holy Writ refusing sympathy, even interest, in the deep, dark floods of misery with which, though her name is not mentioned, those few words of a brother's hate and wrath and murder teem? Not alone a mother's anguish, deprived of both of her children in one fearful day, not alone the wild yearnings of affection toward the guilty and the exile, struggling with the passionate misery of her own bereavement; but more crushing, more agonizing still, *it was her own work*. She had disobeyed to obtain the knowledge of good and evil, and how appallingly had that forbidden knowledge poured back its stinging poison into her own heart! Her beautiful had fallen, the helpless and the innocent crushed by the strong hand of the guilty, and the Eternal had looked down from his awful throne and interfered not. Why had the only innocent, the only righteous, been the first to pay the penalty of death, when his guilty parents and yet more guilty brother were permitted still to live? In the death of the innocent, *immortality* was proclaimed."

"Eve could not now, as she had done in Eden, realize so blessedly the preëminence of the spirit over the feelings of the clay. Though comforted, the weakness of humanity must still have been too often in the ascendant and taught her all the bitterness of grief. Even though the thought of Abel might, through the unselfishness of woman's love, be tranquilized by the idea that, however she might suffer, he was happy as she had been in Eden, no such comfort could attend the thought of Cain. It was vain to measure the maternal love by the worth or the unworthiness of its objects. It was not only that he was exiled forever from her sight, that her yearning heart might never seek to soothe him more, but she knew

that he was, he must be, a wretched wanderer; and the mother felt his wretchedness, though she saw it not, in addition to her own. Mercy, indeed, had tempered his chastisement, for he had not been cut off in his sin; he had been doomed to length of days on earth, that he might repent and atone; but this to a weak and suffering parent, though she might struggle to lift up her heart in gratitude, could not afford consolation."

When Adam was one hundred and thirty years of age, we are told, he begat another son in his own likeness. The expression is a peculiar one. Not only was he like him in the structure of his body and the faculties of his mind, but his nature was sinful. The sacred writer seems to hint at the contrast between the image in which Adam was made and that in which his children were begotten. Adam was created in God's image, pure and holy; after his fall he begat a son who was frail, mortal, sinful. The mother called him Seth, for God "hath appointed me another seed instead of Abel whom Cain slew." Her hopes had centered in Abel, but when he was sacrificed to his brother's cruelty it was a great loss. She still had a son in name, for Cain was yet alive, but he was worse than none, and she hoped to find in Seth one who had the virtues of Abel; and in this she was not disappointed, for through him and his descendants, the true religion was preserved for many ages.

Adam lived after he begat Seth eight hundred years and begat sons and daughters. He was nine hundred and thirty years old when he died. As this pair were to replenish the earth and as they had children after the murder of Abel, there is a strong probability that there were other children beside these. "Those whom we do know are named only because there was something remarkable to record of them; but that there were others not named is certain from the facts which imply that there were other people in the earth at the time. We know that there were daughters, and the fact that their existence only transpires incidentally expresses the probability of a similar silence respecting other children. Cain we know was married, which was probably the case also with Abel. They must, therefore, from the necessities of the case, have had sisters with whom they contracted marriage, although neither their names nor the fact of their birth is recorded. One would like to have had some information respecting the first

daughter of Eve. There is an old tradition that Cain and Abel had respectively twin sisters, and the twin of Cain became the bride of Abel and the twin of Abel the bride of Cain."

We have no further record of Eve's eventful life. We are not told when nor how she died, nor where she was buried. In all human probability, she, like Adam, lived to a good old age. We feel very sure that she must have repented long before her death and been forgiven. And though her life was a sad one, she died in the faith of the promised Messiah who was to bruise the serpent's head. The divine Father was as patient and forgiving then as now. Her example and sad life teach us that happiness will only come in obedience to God's commands. All sin and suffering have their origin in wilful disobedience to God.

"What comfort, when with clouds of woe
The heart is burdened and must weep,
To feel that pain must end—to know
'He giveth his beloved sleep.'

"When in the mid-day march we meet
The outstretched shadows of the night,
The promise, how divinely sweet!—
'At eventime it shall be light.'"

—*Alice Carey.*

Sarah---the Princess

"And now that Sarah is dead, Abraham came to mourn and to weep for her. It is a hard thing to part with those we have known longest and best. When such parting comes, 'tis the survivor dies; memory is quickened into a strange vividness; the past life comes up and passes its days before the eyes in all their variety and color and service. I hear Abraham talking to himself: 'Oh, how sad is this loneliness! How awful is the stillness of this silence! I can talk to Isaac, but not as I did to his mother; there are some eighty years of life that he knows nothing about. Sarah and I wandered together, talked out our hearts to one another, planned and dreamed and suffered in one common experience, and there she lies a stranger amongst strangers, cold and silent forever.' And Abraham wept. The man who slew the kings, wept. The man whose name is to endure as long as the sun, wept."

—*Dr. Joseph Parker.*

Sarah—the Princess

SARAH was the wife of Abraham, the founder of the Jewish nation. Abraham speaks of her as his sister, the daughter of the same father, but not the daughter of the same mother. Many suppose this simply means that Haran, her father, was her half-brother, for in accordance with the use of language among the Hebrews, he could call a niece a sister and a granddaughter a daughter. Her history is in part the history of Abraham. God determines to lift Abraham out of the idolatry which is all about him in Ur of the Chaldees, and through him build up a great nation. In obedience to a divine call, this man and his childless wife set out on a strange journey. They were seeking a land which was to be shown them, but where it was they knew not. They carried with them all they had, piled upon the camels' backs, and a few servants probably to care for their cattle. An orphan nephew was the only one of their family who had the courage to ally himself with them. "As we dimly picture them setting forth in the pale dawn of history, we seem to see the laden camels pacing slowly, towering above the slow-footed sheep. We hear the drivers' cries and the bleating of the sheep, broken by the wail of parting women." It would not be strange if Sarah at that supreme hour bent over her camel's neck with a bursting heart and with a longing to remain with her own kindred. We are not sure that she had any call from God, and while Abraham is going forth in obedience to the voice of God, which he ever afterward followed, she was going because loyal to her husband.

They came by way of Damascus, where, no doubt, they tarried for a time. His first halt in the land of promise is at Shechem, about in the center of Canaan. Here he reared his first altar to Jehovah. How much or how little he knew of God at this time we do not know. God's selection of men for important places never excludes some natural phases in the person chosen. A writer says of him: "When he turned his face to the dreaded desert which stretched wide and inhospitable between him and the

nearest seats of men, he gave his first evidence of that trust in the unseen Eternal One, leading to unquestioning, heroic obedience which even then had formed the basis of his character and of which his later life was to furnish so many illustrious examples. '*By faith,* Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should afterwards receive for an inheritance, *obeyed;* and he went out not knowing whither he went,' is the comment of the Scripture."

After a time there is a famine in the land of promise, which would be a trial of the man's faith. In the fertile plains of Chaldea no doubt he had had an abundance, but now he is made to suffer hunger as do others. So far as known to us, this new emigrant does not seem to ask divine counsel, but on his own discretion starts southward in search of food for himself and cattle and finally lands in Egypt. The religion of this people was a superstitious worship of nature. He knew the weakness of human nature in a lax state of society. He may have known something of the character of the people which we do not know and which tended to intensify his fears. In a sense the people were respectful to women, and yet they were sensual. He insinuates plainly that they were even less scrupulous about murder than adultery, and they would be willing to kill him for the sake of securing possession of his handsome wife.

The Rabbinic traditions are valuable as showing how deep an impression this man and his wife have made upon mankind. According to them, Abraham rested some days by the River Nile. He saw his wife's form reflected there as they walked by the river, and he was afraid he would be slain for her sake. He had her placed in a chest so he could cross the river, and when the custom-house officers should ask him, he would pay whatever they asked if they would pass it then.

"'Does it contain silks?' ask the officers.

"'I will pay the tenth, as of silk,' he replied.

"'Does it contain silver?' they inquired.

"'I will pay for it as silver,' answered Abraham.

"'Nay, then it must contain gold.'

"'I will pay for it as gold.'

"'Maybe it contains most costly jewels.'

"'I will pay for it as jewels,' he persisted.

"In the struggle the box was broken open and in it was seated a beautiful woman whose countenance allured all Egypt. The news reached the ears of Pharaoh and he sent and took her."

To call Sarah his sister was a half truth, but it was intended to deceive. His conduct showed distrust in the protection of God and fear for his own safety. "It did a cruel wrong to his wife, for it exposed her to the most serious of all hazards. No defense can be offered for a man who, merely through dread of danger to himself, tells a lie, risks his wife's chastity, puts temptation in the way of his neighbor, and betrays the charge to which the divine favor has summoned him. Not even the excuse can be offered of a sudden impulse, for the scheme was prearranged between husband and wife before they entered Egypt. . . . Deceit in order to gain a point or avert a disaster is to this day an inveterate habit with most Orientalists; in the best times of Israel, many others of lofty character are found succumbing to this dastardly vice. The tendency evidently lay deep in the race from its first appearance."

The arrival of so large a company would attract attention. All who see the princess are struck with her beauty. This may in part have been due to the race from which she sprang, or the skies under which she lived. "To-day the beautiful Circassian girls of the adjacent mountain region are sold in Constantinople, and it is said there are no cheeks so soft and creamy, no eyes so deep and lustrous, as theirs, no form so sylph-like and willowy. Of all the nations of the earth, none has ever equaled that from which Sarah sprang." These princes are courteous, and, desiring to stand well with the king, they make haste to tell him of the remarkable woman who has just arrived. The purpose of all this would be to supplant some other favored one and thus work their way into court favor and secure court honors.

Just what Abraham expected to do to avert trouble, we are not quite sure. If, attracted by her beauty and desirous of marrying her, some one should make a proposition, as her brother, he might delay matters by differing as to dower or such things, until the famine would be over. He most likely did not dream of any interest on the part of the king. The king would not have dared to take the wife of a distinguished visitor, but a sister he might take and no one could object. He takes steps to add her to his

household as a new wife. He adds many tokens of respect and confers many favors upon Abraham. Before his plans were fully consummated, "the Lord plagued Pharaoh and his house," and he learns that he has been deceived and that Sarah was a wife and not a sister. "The king took back none of the rich presents which he had made to the presumed brother, probably as the purchase money for a wife, nor did he offer to strip the shepherd chief of the increased wealth which had accrued to him in the fertile grazing grounds of Goshen, where his descendants in the third generation were to be quartered. Still less, though the sheik was wholly in the monarch's power, did he show him the slightest violence. With nothing worse than a reproach, which is severe just because it is so gently expressed, he bade him take back his wife and begone."

How many of us have speculated as to what would be the result from this or that course of action, and how often have we been disappointed! We may have plans, but God also has plans. If ours agree with his, he may bless them; but if not, he may overrule them so as to promote his own, or may blast them for our good. "The evil which Abraham apprehended with respect to Sarah did indeed happen, but it was brought about by the very measure he had taken to avert it; and there is every reason to suppose that, had he from the first boldly declared that she was his wife, relying on the protection of God, nothing of the kind would have taken place; as it was, this very desire of passing her off for his sister, which was designed to secure his safe sojourn amid the plenty of Egypt, became the very instrument of compelling his return to the land of Canaan.'

How long Abraham and his wife remained in Egypt we do not know; but when sent away, they returned to the old camping ground near Bethel. In Egypt he laid the foundation of the family wealth, which must afterward have become enormous. Owing to trouble among the herdsmen, he found it necessary for him and Lot to separate. Lot chose Sodom because well watered and fertile. Soon after this he moved to Mamre, near Hebron, where he dwelt for some time. Before he came hence the Lord again cheered him by a repetition of the promise that he should possess Canaan by a numerous posterity.

Abraham had now been ten years in the land of promise, and, although growing old, was not impatient for the fulfillment of the promise. He was to have a child and through him a numerous posterity, but it had not been declared who the mother should be. Sarah, concerned for her husband's glory and happiness, and seeing but little hope at her advanced age that she should give birth to a child, concluded that the promise, if fulfilled, must be through the person of another; so she offered to Abraham for a secondary wife Hagar, her maid, a servant who had probably been given to her in Egypt. There was nothing in this arrangement which seemed wrong to Abraham at the time, although it carries an unpleasant look to us. It would have seemed better for him to have waited by faith for the fulfillment of the promise. "For a mistress to seek by means of a female slave and favorite attendant what Providence had denied to herself, was regarded as neither immoral nor revolting. It was not even held to be any real departure from the law of monogamy or any infraction of conjugal fidelity."

What might have been expected as a natural result now happens. When the young mistress saw that she was about to give birth to a child, she is elated with the honor, and no doubt becomes a little vain if not insolent. The vast possessions of Abraham will now be entailed upon her posterity. It would be entirely natural for Sarah to have some feelings of jealousy also when she saw that this woman, her slave, would soon enjoy the advantage thus far denied her of becoming the happy mother of a child. She now blames her husband for that which she herself had planned and suggested. When she is now reaping the fruits of her own suggestions, she begins to repent of her rashness. Instead, however, of confession and condemning her own conduct, she turns against her husband and could not have used more severe language if he had purposely planned to injure her. Her conduct is that of a peevish, disappointed woman, who had made a serious blunder, and yet she appeals to God in a case where she was clearly in the wrong. Hitherto the woman was Sarah's slave and she had the exclusive right to control her; but now, having in a sense become the wife of Abraham, it is not likely she can be disposed of without the consent of Abraham. He does not seem to know much of the ill feeling that is going on in the woman's tent until he is

informed of it by Sarah. He is a gentleman, with no taste for domestic quarrels, and without upbraiding Sarah for what had been done he simply resigns all control and tells her, "Behold, thy maid is in thy hand."

The record tells us that Sarah "dealt harshly with her." This may mean by verbal reproaches, but more likely by some personal mistreatment. The treatment was so severe that Hagar flees from her home, but she cannot flee from the face of God. She is the mother of Abraham's child, and has an interest in the protection of the Almighty. An angel finds her and inquires whither she is going and sends her back again with instruction to "submit thyself under her hands." For her encouragement he tells her that her child shall be the father of a great nation.

The whole transaction shows Sarah in a not very enviable light. She is the eager, impulsive, hot-headed woman who is accustomed to be indulged, who is impatient in her troubles, and who is positive that she is in the right. She is amazed and angry because her husband does not bring this slave woman to terms. If she again gets possession of her, she will teach her a lesson how to conduct herself toward her superiors. "A more magnanimous woman might have spared the sister whom she had herself thrown into a position of difficulty; but this Chaldean princess was not above showing unhandsome spite when her woman's pride had been touched to the quick. She made the girl's life so bitter that at the last Hagar fairly ran away from her master's encampment and fled toward her native land of Egypt."

From his birth, Hagar's son, Ishmael, was regarded by his father as his promised heir, in whom the nations of the earth should be blessed. For thirteen years he was the hope and joy of his parents and the master of that household. When Abraham was ninety and nine years old, the silence from heaven was once more broken, the covenant is renewed with him, and the rite of circumcision is established. At the same time he tells him that, old as his wife is, yet she shall bear a son and "kings of the people shall be of her." This was confirmed some time later. As he sat at his tent door, in accordance with the etiquette of the times to receive any guests who might come, three strangers approach. "Notice the beautiful hospitality of the reception. The emir rushes himself to his herd to choose the fattest calf and com-

mands the princess to make ready the meal and knead the cakes. Then comes the report. The account of the promised blessing at which Sarah laughs in incredulous surprise, the grave rebuke of the angels, and Sarah's white lie, with the angel's steady answer, are all so many characteristic points of the story. Sarah in all these incidents is, with a few touches, made as real flesh and blood as any woman in the pages of Shakespeare; not a saint, but an average mortal with all the follies, weaknesses, and variabilities that pertain to womanhood, and to womanhood in an early age of imperfectly developed morals."

Abraham was one hundred years old when Isaac was born. At the age of three years, as was the custom with Jewish women, her child was weaned. Great preparations were made for this festive occasion. In the gladness of her motherly heart she exclaims, "God hath made me to laugh, so that all that hear will laugh with me. Who would have said unto Abraham, that Sarah should have given children suck? for I have born him a son in his old age." Up to this age, we find the son of the bondwoman nurtured along with her son, Isaac, under the same roof. No doubt when Hagar returned she was reconciled to her, and their relations were fairly pleasant. Possibly she treated kindly the mother and petted the boy until he began to be too unpleasant to be endured.

The story further tells us that Ishmael, who was now coming into manhood and should have had more self control, jeered at the little child who was so soon to displace him. This mocking started once again the hot blood of Sarah. A wise woman would have excused him because of his youth, and the hot blood of his mother, and trusted to the after years to secure his acquiescence in the divine plans; but Sarah was no more thoughtful than she had been years before, and could not brook any insult to him who was to be the heir of the promise. It may be she had not forgotten their previous encounter, and the memory of this only intensified the present. She peremptorily insists that the bondwoman and her son shall be cast out, and that Ishmael shall not be an heir with Isaac. Abraham demurs to this arrangement. Sarah's mind is fixed exclusively on Isaac, but Abraham, as the father of both children, has an affection for each and he cannot well be indifferent to Hagar with whom he lived as his wife. The voice of the Lord, however, comes to his help and assures him that, severe as the

demand of Sarah may be, it was in keeping with the divine plan and would be best in the end for both of them. Had they remained and grown up together, no doubt much strife and danger would have arisen between the children, if not indeed between their mothers. As soon as he learned it was the divine will, he need no longer hesitate. He arose in the morning, provided them with such things as they would need on the journey, and sent them away.

As to the particular nature of the offense in the case of Ishmael, we have no account, but a prominent writer makes a conjecture after this fashion: "In the common events of life all that is incomprehensible, is either ridiculed, disbelieved, or made a matter of scandal, and therefore in a case so uncommon as this, it is more than probable reports very discreditable both to Sarah and Abraham were propagated all around them. Hagar indeed and Ishmael must have known differently, that it was the hand of God which worked and therefore all things were possible; but it was to Ishmael's interest to dispute or deny the legitimacy of Isaac, and therefore it was not in human nature to neglect the opportunity. No other offense would have so grated on Sarah. We are apt to think more poetically than justly of this part of the Bible. In a mere superficial reading we acknowledge Sarah does appear in rather an unfavorable light; that this, however, is a wrong judgment, is proved by the fact that the Eternal himself desires Abraham to hearken to the voice of Sarah."

The years following this were in all human probability among the happiest of Abraham's life. He is on friendly terms with his neighbors and therefore dwells at peace among his flocks. The country about him is pleasant and his wealth is abundant. The years pass quietly by and bring with them never-failing plenty for his whole encampment. More than all else, his earthly home has been blessed with the child of promise. "His weary waitings throughout a quarter of a century had been at last rewarded by a son of his lawful wife, the gift of his covenant with God, to be in due time the heir of his possessions and, better far, the heir also of that mysterious blessing which in his seed was one day to bless all nations. And yet, after many years of unbroken rest and satisfied desires, there burst on Abraham, like a bolt out of a clear sky, the supreme crisis of his discipline."

There comes to Abraham the command to take this son of his, this heir of the promise, and to offer him to the Lord as a burnt offering. The loss of a beloved child at any time would be a great affliction; but in the present case, to sacrifice this child would in effect extinguish the hope of the world. There is but one thing for him to do. He has been schooled too well and too long not to know that the Lord's ways are the best ways. He might have said many things, but with his heart almost breaking he yet said nothing. He obeys the command. He makes careful preparation so that nothing shall be wanted for the sacrifice. And thus "early in the morning," he rises and saddles his ass for the journey; and with this boy, now possibly nearly twenty years of age, and attended by two servants, he starts on his sad journey.

We hear nothing of Sarah in all this transaction. Did she know of this remarkable call which Abraham had heard, that her child, the child of her old age, the progenitor of nations, was to be carried away and put to death? And was her confidence in God so strong that she agreed with her husband that he who gave had also the right to take away? Was she up early on that eventful morning to help prepare this son for the great trial before him? As she went about the work of the early morning preparing provisions for this journey, did not her heart almost break, and did not the big tears course down her cheeks? Did not her motherly affection put her arms about his neck and with breaking heart imprint the last kiss on his much loved cheek? Or did Abraham slip away that morning, taking that mother's boy away without her knowledge, believing that if she knew of his purpose, her mother-love would be so strong that he would have difficulty in obeying the command? Did he not feel that that mother's faith was not as strong as his own, and that her rebellious heart would surely say nay to his further proceeding? Alas, we know not and can only conjecture. Surely, that father could not, would not, take away that mother's darling without at least a fond farewell. Says one, "That which he must do, he will do; he that hath learned not to regard the life of his son, hath learned not to regard the sorrow of his wife."

Another puts it after this fashion: "The trial of faith in the sacrifice of his son was given to the *father;* but the mother was spared the consuming agony which must have been her portion,

even had her faith continued strong. God had compassion on the feebler, weaker nature of his female servant. He demanded not from her that which he knows the mother could not bear. He spared her, in his immeasurable love, the suffering which it pained him to inflict on the father—the suffering and temptation not to satisfy the Lord, for his omnipotence knew that his faithful servant would not fail, but to prove to future ages the mighty power of spiritual faith and love, even while in mortal clay."

If Sarah knew for what purpose Isaac had been taken from home, and had even in her tears consented that Abraham should carry out the Lord's will as he understood it, how rejoiced she is when he returned again, having been miraculously saved, and thus the Lord has been obeyed and her child preserved to her. If she did not know of it until it was all passed, how her brain would throb as she listened to the great danger and the more wonderful deliverance. "Isaac had never been so precious had he not been recovered from death, if he had not been as marvelously restored as given. The only way to find comfort in an earthly thing is to surrender it in a believing carelessness into the hands of God."

After that eventful scene at Moriah, there is no voice from heaven to break the silence of his uneventful years. There may be no occasion, for his relation to God is well assured. He goes back to Beersheba and he lives on, a period of twenty-four years of which we have no mention. With our rapid lives, living and enjoying in one year more than these people did in five, with a multitude of things to engage our attention and divide our interests, we can hardly realize how the members of such a family as Abraham's would grow to need each other and how much one should be missed. Through long periods they were constantly together and each would seem necessary to the other. "Of society, except that of their own slaves, there was little or none. The round of easy occupations which made up their shepherd life left ample leisure for domestic converse. It was inevitable that their lives should grow together as if kneaded into one. Husband and wife, parent and child, must have molded one another's character to an extent hardly possible in other states of society. From such a close circle of relations the disappearance of one loved and familiar face would leave a blank never to be filled and scarcely ever to be forgotten."

It was a sad event in this family when death made the first breach, and, at the age of one hundred and twenty-seven years, Sarah, the princess, the wife and mother, fell asleep. It made a sad, desolate life for Abraham. She was the only one who linked him to the memories of the past and brought back the incidents of his youth. Of those who had started out on that strange pilgrimage sixty-two years before, she was the only one left. She was ten years his junior and her removal reminded him that there was another journey before him, and it was not far distant, which was even more venturous than the one he had already taken. What their convictions of th other life were, we cannot now tell. The departed were believed to have some kind of conscious existence, but the land whither they went was still a dumb land—a land full of questions without answers. There is no doubt but that the dim light which Abraham brought with him from his childhood was confirmed and maybe made more definite as he meditated on what God had revealed to him.

The wife of his early years, the one who had been with him in all his wanderings, who had shared his trials, and whom he loved to the last, now leaves him. The account of the sacred writer is tender and touching: "And Sarah was an hundred and seven and twenty years old: these were the years of the life of Sarah. And Sarah died in Kirjath-arba; the same is Hebron in the land of Canaan: and Abraham came to mourn for Sarah, and to weep for her." The noisy wailing, which custom requires should be arranged for the funeral of a princess, was no doubt going on outside; but Abraham sits alone, most likely in Sarah's tent beside his dead, his heart almost benumbed and scarcely able to think at all, and if thinking, full of sad, bitter thoughts. Old man as he is, and having led an eventful life, the experiences of thirty years have not extinguished in his heart emotions which such an event should awaken. Mourning for the dead is a tribute to the memory of their living worth. There is nothing opposed to true wisdom or the manly virtues in a proper lamentation for our departed friends.

But he cannot delay long. The climate is too warm and he must bury his dead out of his sight. Although heir of the promise, he has no sepulcher in which to place his dead. He has been here for possibly sixty years, and yet has not a foot of soil he can call

his own. His home has been his shifting tent, and his domain the wide desert. He must have some place for his dead which will be a pledge to his posterity of his faith in God's promise. When he chose his burial place in Canaan, he removed all connection with the past. He probably was familiar with caves for burial in the land of Ur (Mugheir), from which he came. When he comes to the children of Heth to secure a burial place he tells them, "I am a stranger and a sojourner with you." "Never does the impression of this great truth come upon us with such force, never do we feel the ties that bind us to the earth so loosened, so nearly rent asunder, as when we stand by the grave of those we love. Would that we could carry this abiding conviction along with us in the daily business of life. How little influence would its trials and disappointments have over us."

In accordance with the customs of the times, he buys the cave of Machpelah and pays for it with silver. He obtained not only the cave itself but "the field and all the trees that were in the field and that were in the borders round about." He not only secured a burial place, but by this transaction he helped to keep alive among his descendants the expectation of sometime possessing this land. Without some such reminder they might, during their Egyptian bondage, forget their future destiny. It had the designed effect. Here were buried Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, and Jacob and Leah, although Jacob died in Egypt. And Joseph gave commandment that he also should be carried back with them and buried in the land of promise. Here in this cave near Hebron he buried Sarah.

"The piety of some unknown age, probably Jewish, erected round the spot massive walls of noble masonry which still exist. Inside these walls the devotion of early Christians consecrated a church, and over the church the devotion of the Mussulmans, a mosque. The gates of that mosque, the famous Haran of Hebron, had been closed against Western unbelievers for six centuries, when with extreme difficulty access to it was procured for the Prince of Wales in 1862. Railed off, each one within its separate chapel, there lie the coffin-like shrines to which are attached the venerable names of Sarah and Abraham, of Isaac and Rebekah, of Leah and Jacob. These, however, are only empty monuments. The real tombs, if they exist at all, must be sought beneath the

floor of the building in the rocky cavern underground. To this vault a trapdoor in the pavement promises to give access; but as yet its darkness remains unvisited and unviolated. So far as could be ascertained through such a brief and partial inspection of the mosque, it is clear that the contents of that sacred place answer exactly to the requirements of the Scriptural narrative. Unfortunately more than this cannot be said. It is reserved for some explorer more fortunate than even the Prince of Wales to disclose the well-kept secret of the tombs of the patriarchs."

While Sarah is human, with human frailties and human ambitions, her character is in the main a very commendable one. Peter (I. Peter 3:1, 6) commends her for her loyalty to her husband. "Likewise ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; . . . even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement." She retained the love of her husband to the very last. She was his faithful helpmeet going with him, sharing his good or bad fortunes, caring for his interests, and exhibiting toward him the most loving respect. So far as we know, she never deceived him. When she wanted Hagar sent away, she may have shown a little temper, but she was open and frank in her plans.

Then she is to be commended for her care of her son and her anxiety that he should be surrounded with proper influences. This was her only child, the child of her old age, and for this reason very dear to her. But in addition to this she knew he was to be the heir of the promises, and through him the nations of the earth should be blessed. She saw Ishmael, "mocking." He was thirteen years older than Isaac and a wild and rude boy She had reason to believe that this reckless boy would corrupt her own and therefore she sought their separation. It seemed a little severe to send this mother and child away, but it met the divine approval. It was better that Isaac should grow up under different influences, and the mother's foresight saw such a result, and her strong mother-love went to work at any cost to preserve her boy.

How much her son, Isaac, was influenced by her home training we do not know. He does not have the vigor of his father. Says a writer: "He makes no stir in the world, no noise, he excites

no emotion. We only catch a glimpse of him now and then, sufficient to enable us to recognize him as a dutiful son to his father, a loving son to his mother, an affectionate, uxorious husband, a partial father, and a pious but weak old man. He seldom speaks. He wants force of character; and soon subsides into an instrument in the hands of others, who use him for their own purposes. So we never meet with Isaac in positive and decisive action, but commonly find him in some instrumental position or other."

Hagar---the Slave Wife

"Her God is ours. He speaks to us as plainly as he spoke to Hagar. We have felt him in the first crisis of our life as the All-seeing, and have obeyed his call to take up the duties of a steady life. Then many years pass by, and monotony lays its withering finger on our life. We need another shock—the shock of the afternoon of life—if we are to grow into something higher. And it comes, awakening us from the commonplace, stirring us to our center. Cruel and bitter we think it, as we are driven into the desert, leaving behind us all the ancient loves and sorrows. We go forth carrying with us our last hope, our last aspiration, the child of our whole life, desiring, at least, to save that from the tempest of sorrow. And the misery grows deeper, the thirst for our lost youth, our lost energy, our lost brightness. At last it seems we can bear no more. The heaven is brass to our prayer; the water is spent in the bottle. We cast away our last hope and turn aside lest we see it die."

Stopford A. Brooke, in "The Old Testament and Modern Life."

Hagar—the Slave Wife

OF the early history of Hagar we have no definite information. We are told that Sarah "had an handmaid, an Egyptian, whose name was Hagar." She was a bondwoman, a female slave, in opposition to a free woman. In accordance with usages of the time, she might be disposed of by her mistress, Sarah, as she chose. It is more than likely she became a member of Abraham's family during his visit to Egypt and may have been one of the "maid servants" presented by Pharaoh to Abraham or, more probably, to Sarah. The name Hagar is supposed to mean *flight, fugitive, stranger.* As it is a Hebrew name, it is not likely that it was given her by her parents, but probably came to her afterwards in process of time from the leading events of her history. It was customary in those times for the male and female departments of a family to be kept in some measure distinct, and hence Hagar is Sarah's servant as Eliezer is Abraham's servant. The relation between the servant and the mistress is so intimate that the children of the maid by the master are reckoned as those of the mistress.

Although Abraham is to be the father of the faithful, up to this date he is childless, and he seems to have had some thought of adopting an heir, most likely his faithful steward Eliezer, but the Lord comes to him again and tells him, "This shall not be thine heir, but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels." Hitherto the promise had only been a general one, that he should be blessed with an innumerable seed without regard to who should be the heir, but the promise is now renewed so explicitly that hereafter there can be no mistake. He was to be the father, but it was not yet said who would be the mother. When this information was given, it began to press more and more upon the mind of this princess that possibly she was the instrument which thus far had obstructed the fulfillment of the promise. For more than ten years she had looked forward to the birth which should bring joy to both their hearts. It did not seem best to her to wait any

longer for the fulfillment of the divine plan. She began to suggest to her husband to seek through other methods, not unusual in those days nor in any way thought improper, the attainment of this promise.

The true way would have been to allow God to fulfill his own promise in his own time, and not to hasten it by any questionable methods of their own. Abraham might have taken to himself another wife, but neither he nor Sarah seemed to think of a second marriage. The customs of the age allowed a different method. The slave was entirely in the hands of his master, much as it was in the early slavery days in our own land. "Every home slave stood at the disposal of his lord for whatever service the lord might require. His very children were not his own but his master's. For a mistress, therefore, to seek by means of a female slave and favorite attendant what Providence had denied to herself, was regarded under such a state of feeling as neither immoral nor revolting. It was not even held to be any real departure from the law of monogamy or any infraction of conjugal fidelity." So Sarah advised that Abraham take her servant as his secondary wife and he consented. He is eighty-five and Sarah seventy-five years of age.

The result was as might have been anticipated. Up to this date Hagar seems to have been a faithful, obedient servant who gave no occasion to Sarah for any reproof. It is not long until it is evident that Hagar will become the mother of a child. The young woman, so pliant before, now becomes elated with the idea of the honor which is put upon her and becomes a little vain and insolent. When she finds that her son is to become heir to Abraham's vast possessions, her blood boils with exultation and "her mistress was despised in her eyes." There might have been others who had grievances of their own and who were only too ready to fill this mother's too credulous ears with their suggestions. Hagar will now become the mother of the heir of the tribe, her son will become the chief ruler; while Sarah, the childless, will, in the not far distant future, take a secondary place.

It must have been a great disappointment to Sarah, who, instead of receiving increased gratitude and affection from one whom she had reared and nourished and cherished, was despised with an insolence that might, if not checked, bring discord into

this very household where there had been peace and quiet. In place of a devoted woman, identified with her success, whose child should be loved and treated as her own, she is at once met by a woman who plants herself as a proud rival seeking her place and position. Sarah was not a woman to tamely submit to such ingratitude. In the new relation into which Hagar had come by Sarah's own consent, she cannot be summarily dismissed. While she is Sarah's servant, she is now Abraham's wife, the mother of his child, and thereby entitled to protection against any outbursts of passion or of jealousy.

When Sarah saw how her plans had miscarried, the whole affair became hateful to her. The crime may not have been altogether her own, but she assails her husband somewhat severely and lays at his door the blame of a transaction which was entirely of her own devising. "My wrong be upon thee." How this could be we do not exactly see. Possibly she means that Abraham, as the chief, should have rebuked Hagar's insolence and redressed the wrong which Sarah suffered. It cannot mean that she reproves Abraham for entering into a relation which she herself had suggested. She is simply reaping what she has sown when it is too late to repent or to undo what has been done. Abraham could not be severe upon the future mother of his child and retain his own self respect. He went to the very verge of tenderness when he relinquished his rights and permitted Sarah to do as she desired. Hagar was no rival of the lawful wife, but a slave and, as such, at her disposal. A tender-hearted, forgiving woman might have spared the slave sister whom she had thrust into such a place, and we cannot but think that Sarah showed a little vindictiveness in her treatment of the matter.

As a result of this bitterness of feeling, we are taught that "Sarah dealt hardly with her," says the margin "afflicted her," most likely by some kind of personal maltreatment, as the expression seems too strong to mean simply verbal reproaches. It is questionable whether Abraham was not a little too yielding at this time to allow this slave woman to be so afflicted. He refrained from upbraiding Sarah as he might reasonably have done. He preferred domestic peace rather than to justify himself and place the blame where it properly belonged. The whole affair was very unfortunate, to say the least. "Sarah is betrayed by the eagerness

of her spirit first into a culpable expedient, then into unkindness and undutifulness towards her lord, then into irreverence and impiety toward God, and finally, by an easy transition, into barbarity towards the helpless handmaid whom her own scheme had brought into a condition that claimed her utmost compassion and kindness."

Smarting under the severe words and harsh treatment of her indignant mistress, this proud, hot-blooded, untrained, slave girl flees for her life. Better the peace and quiet of her own Egypt among kindred and friends than the bitter usage of this high-handed princess. She takes the direction toward that country which led her to what was afterwards called "Shur." It was a sandy tract west of stony Arabia, extending one hundred and fifty miles between Palestine and Egypt. The caravan road between these two countries still lies through the heart of this desert. She is fleeing from the face of an unkind mistress, but she cannot flee from God. The interest which Abraham has in her as the future mother of his child brings her under the special care and protection of the Almighty. "One well-known and welcome fountain broke to the traveler of that age his monotonous march across the barren interval which divides the rolling pastures on the southwest of Hebron from the nearest green corner of Egypt." Here by this spring was this runaway girl sitting to replenish her skin-bottle with water or to recruit her wearied limbs, and here the angel of the Lord met her. It must have been with a feeling of awe that Hagar witnessed this remarkable appearance and listened to this communication. The gods of Egypt were all invisible and there hung over them a veil of silence. Their shrines were dark recesses which could be trodden by the feet of no profane or uninitiated one. But here she meets one who had seen her a lowly, fugitive slave, had followed her in her wanderings to this place, had allowed himself to be seen of her, and had revealed to her what should happen in the hereafter and which only immortal beings could know. Was it not appropriate that she should call this place "the well of the God of seeing"?

He addresses her as "Sarah's maid," and inquires why she is here and whither she is going. The calling of her name in this desert place where there were no people and therefore none to know her, would excite her wonder and make her think it was

more than a human voice that called to her. The fact that she is addressed as "Sarah's maid" and not as "Abraham's wife," although the latter would be as true as the former, may have been to lower the self-complacency which had led her into these troubles, and lead her mind back to a contemplation of her condition before these troubles had come upon her. She frankly confesses she is fleeing "from the face of my mistress Sarah." "We know our present grievances and we can tell whence we came much better than our future lot or whither we go. In many cases if the truth were spoken, the answer would be, from bad to worse."

The angel commands her to return to her mistress and submit herself to her hands. She had done wrong in behaving so unseemly to her. God does not take part with her in her rebellious pride nor in her desire to usurp the station and the honor of her mistress; nor does he approve of Sarah's severity. They must each learn to bear with the other. As she sat by that well, it may be possible her own conscience began its work and reminded her of her own shortcomings. It was best that Abraham's son should be born and nurtured in his own home. He who holds in his hand even the king's heart and can turn it as he will, can so prepare their hearts that they shall live in peace. "The solitude and dangers of the wilderness and the apparition of the angel, awful though in mercy, would of course greatly have diminished in Hagar's mind the resentment occasioned by her mistress' treatment. With Sarah, on the other hand, the sudden disappearance of her maid, the loss of her services, the great apprehension of the evil which might have befallen a desperate woman in her delicate situation, regret for cruel behavior, together with the soothing effect of time and serious reflection, would no doubt tend to modify and mollify her spirit and dispose her to welcome back the returning fugitive; while Abraham, always wise, gentle, and good, would necessarily rejoice in the restored peace of his family, accompanied as it was with a fresh demonstration of the divine tenderness toward him and his."

And yet God will respect that feeling of motherhood in this girl who begins to seek place and station for the son she is to bring into the world. In recompense for the cruelty of her mistress, she is informed that she is to become the mother of a mighty race. The curtain of the future is turned aside and she

sees sketched in vivid colors the future which awaits her unborn boy, and the characteristics of the people who shall come from him. They shall be men of the desert and shall scorn the city crowds, and so it has been. "Again and again they have been hunted down by invading armies; but neither the Macedonian, nor the Roman, nor the Turk, has been able to establish a settled rule over their inaccessible and inhospitable wastes. Again and again have these predatory hordes swept over adjacent states; but neither have they been willing to exchange the free air of the deserts for the restraints of a settled community. Most unchangeable of races, they dwell where they have always dwelt, in the presence of all their brethren, stable in their instability, while empire has succeeded empire and civilization has grown upon the ruins of preceding civilizations. With characteristic fidelity have their own unwritten traditions handed down the memory of their boasted descent from the father of multitudes through him whose birth was announced by the angel at the fountain."

Hagar went back to her mistress' house with subdued feelings and a disposition to be a faithful servant. Whatever else may come, God has vouchsafed to her a forecast of the future, and her child shall be the founder of a great people. In due time her child is born. No doubt she has told Abraham all about the scene in the wilderness, and so, in accordance with the divine appointment, he calls the child Ishmael, *God will hear,* or as immediately interpreted, *God hath heard,* alluding to the meeting with the angel in the wilderness. So far as we remember this is the first instance of a name given by divine direction before birth, though many instances of like kind occurred afterwards. Peace and quiet seem to prevail in the family. For twelve or thirteen years at least, the son grows up under the shadow of his father's tent, beloved by his parent and kindly and generously treated by his foster mother. So far as is known to Sarah, he is still to be the heir of the promises, the father of the faithful.

After an interval of years God again appears, renews his covenant, and corrects the wrong impressions of Abraham as well as of Sarah, who to this date no doubt believed that Ishmael was the promised seed. Now Sarah herself is to give birth to a child which shall be the lawful heir. When Abraham was one hundred years of age, his son Isaac was born. This event no doubt diffused

a general gladness throughout the whole camp. Yet Hagar must have beheld with sorrow the frustration of her hopes that she had long cherished, that Ishmael should be the future heir. While she may have taken no pains to manifest such disappointment, it was very evident that Ishmael, who was now twelve years of age, sympathized with the feelings of his mother, while his impetuous youth would prevent him from concealing it as did his mother. "Sarah also on her part, was, by the birth of a son of her own, freed from the considerations which had probably hitherto restrained and regulated her conduct toward them; and from one so much older as Ishmael and of a resolute and untractable character, she might reasonably apprehend some danger to the heritage or even the safety of her son in case Abraham should depart from life during his nonage. These feelings finally came to an explosion when Isaac was three years old, at a public festival in honor of his weaning.

Sarah saw Ishmael "mocking." What this means precisely, perhaps cannot be known. Whatever it was, in the eyes of Sarah it was a very grave offense. It might have been a reflection on Sarah herself as we have intimated in the sketch of her life. It may have been some wanton teasing calculated to irritate and vex Isaac. "His mockery awoke in Sarah the old slumbering jealousy. A wise or forebearing woman would probably have borne with the youth's natural vexation, excused his rudeness for the hot blood of his mother that was in him, and trusted as he grew to years of more discretion, to win his acquiescence in the divine arrangement. Sarah was not now, any more than seventeen years before, very wise or very forbearing. Her proud temper could not brook so much as the presence of one who dared to slight, even if he did not presume further, her own Isaac. It is possible too that her former bitterness against Hagar had a little to do with her severity against Hagar's son."

"Cast out this bondwoman and her son," demands Sarah with the air of one accustomed to command, "for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac." The most obvious sense of these words would mean that she desires Abraham to divorce Hagar, or by some legal act so arrange that Ishmael may be excluded from all claim to the inheritance. This seems a hard requirement on the part of Sarah and one which

Abraham hesitates to adopt. He had set his heart on this boy, no doubt expected to rear them both and divide his inheritance with them; and there seemed no human reason why it should not be so. "The thing was very grievous in Abraham's sight." "Sarah's regard was fixed exclusively on Isaac. She did not consider Ishmael as a son but rather as an intruder and a rival. But Abraham, being the father of both, felt a paternal affection for each; nor was he indifferent towards Hagar whom he considered and lived with as a legitimate wife. Perhaps, too, he suspected that Sarah's proposal originated in an irritation of temper, and that less severe measures would in a little time satisfy her mind. As may well be supposed, he was exceedingly grieved at the thought of proceeding to such extremities, but, finding her resolutely bent upon it, he committed the matter to God and sought direction from above."

The word of the Lord came to him probably in a vision in the night, assuring him that severe as was Sarah's demand, it would be best for both of the sons. "Let it not be grievous in thy sight because of the lad, and because of thy bondwoman; in all that Sarah hath said unto thee, hearken unto her voice; for in Isaac shall thy seed be called. And also of the son of the bondwoman will I make a nation, because he is thy seed." Once assured of the will of God, the old patriarch no longer hesitated. To send away his son was no doubt a severe trial to him, but he controls his own paternal instincts in order to obey the divine command. Such severe ordeals still come to the faithful children of Abraham, and they must be prepared to meet them or they are not the children of the father of the faithful. "And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and took bread [provisions] and a bottle [sack] of water, and gave it unto Hagar, putting it on her shoulder and the child [boy] and sent her away; and she departed, and wandered in the wilderness of Beersheba." It would look a little as if starting for Egypt, her native country.

Abraham no doubt furnished them with all the provisions they could carry and he could do no more. "It may absolve Abraham from the charge of cruelty on this occasion if we bear in mind not only that the transaction was altogether in accordance with the manners of those times, but also that it was no difficult thing for any person to find a livelihood in this early age of the

HAGAR

world. Those who had flocks found ground enough to spare in every country to maintain them; and creatures were so numerous that a person who had no flocks might, in the wilderness and in uncultivated places, kill enough of all sorts for his maintenance without injuring anybody; and accordingly we find that Ishmael chose to reside in the wilderness, where he became an archer." "So far as Ishmael was concerned, the archer and huntsman whose home was to be the desert with his bow for his best inheritance, it was well that he should be early trained to the hardships of a nomadic chieftain. For his own comfort, he could not too soon be compelled to forego all idle dreams of one day succeeding to his father's estate. Too soon he could not be withdrawn from the presence of a brother whose priority would only inflame his envy. It was the kindest thing for the youth to send him away from his father's tents. Let it be remembered that he was not sent away from his father's God. The mercies of God are not limited to the area of his covenant."

Hagar starts on her journey with her boy to find again the home of her youth. Hot-blooded, impetuous, wounded, wronged maybe, with no heart to remember the God who once before heard her, she journeys on. If God be pitiful and just, why has he allowed her to be driven away from her own home, a divorced wife, and her son robbed of his inheritance? After a time the water in the skin-bottle gives out, and there is no spring to be found in this inhospitable place. They seemed to have walked until, overcome with thirst, the boy could walk no longer. She supports him as long as she can, but, fearing lest he will die in her arms, she places him under a shrub to screen him from the hot, scorching sun, and goes away the distance to which an arrow would fly. "And she sat over against him, and lifted up her voice, and wept." "A more finished picture of distress it would be difficult to produce. The bitter cries and flowing tears of the afflicted mother, with the groans of her famishing son, are seen and felt as though we were present. Had there been any ear to hear, any eye to pity, or any hand to help the sufferers, their cries and tears might have been mingled with hope; but as far as human aid is concerned, their condition was apparently desperate. But in God, the fatherless and friendless find mercy. Lost in the wilderness, outcast from society, ready to perish with hunger and

thirst, they meet with the notice of him who feeds the ravens, and without whom not a sparrow falleth to the ground."

To those of us in this Western country who have such an abundance of water, it is hard to properly conceive of the sufferings to which those may be subjected who have it not. A traveler who crossed a desert gives an account of great suffering incident to such, from which we extract the following: "Generally speaking, in a desert there are few springs of water, some of them at the distance of four, six, and eight days' journey from one another and not all of sweet water. . . . When the calamity happens that the next well which is so anxiously sought for is found dry, the misery of such a situation cannot be well described. . . . In short, to be thirsting in a desert without water, exposed to the burning sun without shelter, and no hopes of finding either, is the most terrible situation that a man can be placed in and one of the greatest sufferings that a human being can sustain; the eyes grow inflamed, the tongue and lips swell, the hollow sound is heard in the ears which brings on deafness, and the brains appear to grow thick and inflamed; all these feelings arise from the want of a little water."

We are not sure that the mother cried to God. Like her, in our desperate condition we often forget what we should most of all remember. He had met her once before, it may have been in this same wilderness, and had spoken cheering words to her. We often forget God, but he never fails to remember us. In that hour of her deepest desolation, when of all times life seemed the least worth living, she hears a voice of gentle reproof and of encouraging tenderness, which no doubt she had heard years before, saying, "What aileth thee, Hagar? fear not." The condition of the boy had been noticed by Him who seeth all things. She must not desert her son at this critical period. If she had remembered the promise made to her before of the future destiny of this son, she would make every effort to save him, trusting that the divine hand would supply her wants. She once more bestows on the lad the attentions which a mother's love would prompt, and the promise is renewed to her that God will make of him a great nation.

"God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water," from which she hurried to fill her skin-bottle, and gave her son to drink. His thirst was allayed, the vital fluid coursed more freely through

his veins, and his eyes shone with their accustomed luster. The well was there all the time, but she did not see it. The angel did not create the spring in the desert. She had not been seeking God or she may have found it earlier, but he was seeking her. Not that she lacked the organs of vision, for she had these all along, but up to this time the well had escaped her notice and its location was unexpectedly made known to her. How often in our hours of grief there are sources of consolation all about us, and yet because of the blindness of unbelief, we see them not. If we could but keep our eyes open as we journey through this wilderness life, what sights we should see, what comfort we should experience, what wells of refreshing water we should everywhere find! "Should we not, with Jacob, see the angels ascending and descending on errands of mercy to mankind? Should we not, like the servant of Elisha, behold the hosts of heaven engaged for our defense? Should we not, if we could look up steadfastly to heaven, like Stephen, see the glory of God and Jesus standing at his right hand?"

The boy revived and the Lord crowned him with temporal prosperity. He became an archer, which means an adept in the use of the bow and arrow in hunting. He would grow more and more into predatory habits. The expulsion from his father's home would most naturally increase any high temper which he may have originally possessed and help to fix and make permanent that with which he was born. "It would seem that he gradually brought himself to bear, and finally to prefer, that world of living which had at first been obtruded upon him by the strong hands of necessity." "He dwelt in the wilderness of Paran and his mother took him a wife out of the land of Egypt." It shows that the customs of the land had about the forces of law, when one living so wild a life as did this man, in reality a son of the desert, should so willingly in a matter of this kind subject himself to the will of his mother. This wife was an Egyptian woman, one of her own people, and thus he was separated from his father's connections. The wife of Ishmael is not elsewhere mentioned. No record is made of any other wife of Ishmael, and, failing such record, this Egyptian woman must have been the mother of his twelve sons and daughters. It does not seem that there was any serious altercation between Ishmael and Isaac. When Abraham died, "his

sons, Isaac and Ishmael, buried him in the cave of Machpelah." Esau married Ishmael's daughter, Mahalath. When one hundred and thirty-seven years of age, "he died and was gathered to his people." Where he died or where he was buried we know not.

It is interesting to notice how, all along the channel of history, God provides, with a wise foresight of the future, for the upbuilding of nations. "As a skillful husbandman, bent on perfecting a certain seed, separates it from all others and grows it by itself, so the Bible tells us that God selected a certain stock to be trained and cultivated into the sacerdotal race, through which should come his choicest revelations to man. Of this race, in its final outcome and perfected flowering, was to spring forth Jesus, spoken of as the *branch* of this sacred tree. For the formation of this race we see a constant choice of the gentler and quieter elements of blood and character and the persistent rejection of that which is wild, fierce, and ungovernable. Yet it is with no fond partiality for the one or antipathy to the other that the Father of both thus decides. The thoughtful, patient, meditative Isaac is chosen; the wild, hot-blooded, impetuous Ishmael is rejected; not as in themselves better or worse, but as in relation to their adaptation to a great purpose of future good to mankind. The ear of the All-father is as near to the cry of the passionate, hot-tempered slave and the moans of the wild, untamable boy, as to those of the patriarch."

It is startling how minutely the prophecy concerning Hagar's child has been fulfilled. "He shall be a wild ass of a man; his hand against every man's and every man's hand against him." He and his descendants should be the Bedaween of the Arabian elements. A commentator writes thus concerning them: "The character of the Ishmaelites or the Bedaween could not be described more aptly or more powerfully. Against them alone time seems to have no sickle, and the conqueror's sword no edge. They have defied the softening influences of civilization and mock the attacks of the invader. Ungovernable and roaming, obeying no law but their spirit of adventure, regarding all mankind as their enemies whom they must either attack with their spears or elude with their faithful steeds, and cherishing their deserts as heartily as they despised the constraint of towns and communities, the

Bedaween are the outlaws among the nations. Plunder is legitimate game, a daring robbery is praised as valor."

Of the subsequent history of Hagar after securing a wife for her son, we have no record. She may have gone back to Egypt, but most likely she remained with Ishmael the remainder of her life. When she died or where she was buried, we do not know. There is a Mohammedan tradition that she was buried at Mecca. Mr. Rowlands, in traveling through the desert of Beersheba, discovered some wells and a stone mansion which he says the Arabs still designate as those of Hagar.

Paul uses this history of Hagar in his letter to the Galatians to illustrate a valuable truth. Hagar represents the Jewish church which was in bondage to the ceremonial law. She was a slave and her son was born in the ordinary course of nature and without any special interposition. Sarah represents the true church of Christ which was free from this bondage. Her son was the child of freedom, of promise, and was under the benefit of them as long as he lived. "Isaac not merely inherited his father's blood, he showed his father's piety; in him, therefore, was appropriately prefigured all the moral family of God, who in every age have walked in the steps of Abraham and who are summed up in Isaac's anti-type, Jesus Christ. No less conspicuously did the wayward boy who owed his birth to Sarah's willful scheme and Abraham's weakness and Hagar's servitude, typify, both by outward position and spiritual character, all such as stand nominally inside the household of faith, yet have not been born of the Spirit into the free trust and love of sons, but serve God only under a bondman's constraint or with a bondman's fear."

While the character of this woman is not in every respect a model worthy of our imitation, yet it is full of valuable teaching to us all. The way in which God watched over this blinded, hot-headed, passionate, Egyptian slave girl, and cared for her in her time of deepest need, is full of comfort to all bleeding, sorrow-stricken hearts. She was not seeking God, but he sought her. When fleeing from her mistress he sent her back, with a promise that was full of comfort to her heart. And when at last, facing, as she supposed, the death of her darling boy, the same kind voice asked, "What aileth thee, Hagar? fear not." That same voice is speaking to all sinful, wayward, desperate, despairing sinners to-

day. Not only to the righteous but to those whose troubles have come of their own wrongdoing, still appears the angel of the Lord, to reveal to their blinded eyes the fountains of life, which they did not see, and by the drinking of which they shall never thirst again, but it shall be in them a well of water springing up into everlasting life.

Rebekah---the Managing Woman

"Why does not the angel speak audibly to Rebekah? Why should there be two servants, the winged one in the air and the common one in charge of the camels? It is by this double ministry that providences are confirmed. All through life we see this principle of mediation or double ministry at work. . . . In this way you will see many curious coincidences in human life, things that are more easily explained upon religious than upon merely secular grounds. How you meet certain persons, how they come to be at such a place at such a time, how you happened to drop a certain word or give a certain hint, why you should have gone just then and not at another time—these things and a thousand others will puzzle and bewilder you on merely secular principles; but if you believe in God, in his presence, care, and providence in human life, a great light will fall upon the whole outline of your history, and you will own with adoring wonder that God has been directing and stablishing you all your days. Life without a religious interpretation is a pitiful tragedy; life with a religious interpretation may be a torturous road ending in a quiet and blessed heaven."

—*Dr. Joseph Parker.*

Rebekah—the Managing Woman

AFTER the burial of his wife, Sarah, Abraham is the more concerned that his son, Isaac, who is to be the heir of the promises, shall be properly married and settled in life. It may seem a trivial thing that this old man should be so concerned for a son who was now old enough to look after himself, but nothing is trivial that will tend to illustrate the operations of God's grace or serve to build his church. He was surrounded by the idolatrous Canaanites. He had no reason to complain of their personal treatment of himself, but they were enemies to God, and to take their daughters in marriage would be a sure way to corrupt his own family. If other parents would manifest as much interest in seeing that their children were not improperly joined, as did this man, it would be better for the race. To what purpose would it have been to call Abraham away from Chaldean idolatry if his son should join affinity with those who lived in Canaan? He is not looking for wealth or position for his son, but that he may be so mated that his own religious life and character may more certainly be secured.

He resolves to send him back to his own people. While after-results show they were not a model people in every respect and in the days of Jacob show idolatrous taints, they are infinitely better than those about him. He has been absent from them at least sixty years, and, after leaving, never went back, with his own wife. He has learned nothing about them, save what he may have gathered from some passing traveler. He is probably five hundred miles west of them and has none of our modern means of communication. He has a faithful servant whom he probably secured as he came from that country many years before, and he will send him on this very important journey. He makes him solemnly swear that he will not take any of the Canaanitish women, but will go back to his own kindred. Eliezer says nothing in reply of the dangers and hardships of the journey, for he knows the worth of his master and will do anything to serve him; but sup-

pose the woman will not follow him? Abraham has considered this phase of the matter and his faith is equal to the emergency. "The Lord God of heaven, which took me from my father's house and from the land of my kindred, and which spake unto me, and that swear unto me, saying, Unto thy seed will I give this land; he shall send his angel before thee, and thou shalt take a wife unto my son from thence. And if the woman will not be willing to follow thee, then thou shalt be clear from this my oath." Eliezer is satisfied and makes preparations for his journey.

"How admirable a pattern is this for parents! Great numbers bring nothing but worldly considerations to this all-important subject. The outward attractions of fortune, rank, or personal gifts are the only things regarded. No wonder in such unions comfort and serenity of spirit are banished from our abodes. Whether, therefore, we are choosing for ourselves in this matter, or sanctioning the choice of others, let the example of this holy man have its due weight in governing our conduct. Let us learn from him to subordinate everything to the one great concern, the interest of the soul. Let every plan and purpose entertained, every occupation chosen, every place of residence selected, every conviction formed, express our firm and unwavering conviction of the reality, the importance, the preciousness of those interests which infinitely transcend all others."

Eliezer arranges for the journey. What a blessed assurance that God will send his angel before him and prosper his way! From how much anxious thought will this relieve him! We do not suppose that this meant the presence of any personal being, but that God would remove all difficulties from his way, and overrule any objections which should arise. This would not prevent him from using all natural and judicious means for the furthering of his purpose.

The servant thus seems to be the legal guardian of the son. Isaac is not cautioned as to whom he shall marry, but the servant is sworn that he will not marry Isaac to any of the heathen women around him. If the old Patriarch should die, it looks as if the management of the household would fall into the hands of his servant. The preparations which he now makes indicate great wealth on the part of his master. "And the servant took ten camels of the camels of his master, and departed; for all the goods

of his master were in his hand: and he arose, and went to Mesopotamia, unto the city of Nahor."

This seems to be the first notice in the scriptures of actual riding upon camels. "The information respecting this journey leaves us satisfied that the camel had already come to be engaged in these services of transportation and of travel for which it is to this day used; and for which it is so well adapted by a physical constitution which gives it an extraordinary power of resisting thirst, which enables it to endure much fatigue with little sustenance, and which renders the scant herbage of the desert its choicest food; and by the possession of a foot specially adapted, in the wise providence of God, for traversing the sandy wastes and tracts, which, but for its aid, would be impassable."

In addition to these ten camels there must have been a number of attendants and servants. One man could not well have managed them all, nor would it have been in keeping with Oriental notions for one man to have started out for such a purpose. While he had the promise of a successful ending to his mission, he must use the means which will tend to secure a favorable result. This imposing retinue, which would seem almost like a small caravan, would tend to make a favorable impression on the lady who should be solicited, as well as on her family, and would help to assure her and them that in accepting the offer of Eliezer, she would not be in any danger of lessening any of her present comforts.

In due time, after days of weary journeying, Eliezer reaches the place of which he was in quest. Nahor, the brother of Abraham, had lived here. He had eight sons, one of whom, named Bethuel, still resided here. He may have been near Abraham's age, for he seems to be an old man, and all that occurs is under the direction of his son. He had a son named Laban and a daughter Rebekah. The family do not dwell in tents, but have a place in a town which seems to be of some importance. They are engaged in pastoral life; some of their flocks are away from home in the care of shepherds, and others are cared for by themselves. The family seems to be among the most important in the town of Haran. Eliezer could have gone to the house and made known his mission, but he is on important business, and needs to be prudent and discreet. He makes his camels kneel down to rest. There is a well near by, but it may be locked. If not, it would not be

courteous to take the water without permission of the owner. It is approaching evening and some one no doubt will be there to draw water.

Having done the best he could, he proposes to leave the matter in the hands of Him who controls all hearts. In a simple, child-like way, as a son would talk to his father, he talks to God, his Father. It is not a formal, ceremonial address, but a genuine petition of the heart. "Behold, I stand here by the well of water; and the daughters of the men of the city come out to draw water; and let it come to pass, that the damsel to whom I shall say, Let down thy pitcher, I pray thee, that I may drink; and she shall say, Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also; let the same be she that thou hast appointed for thy servant Isaac; and thereby shall I know that thou hast shewed kindness unto my master."

In our time a man who wants a prudent wife does not usually look for her about the village postoffice, the town pump, or the railway depot. But in those earlier days, females of the most honorable families were engaged in domestic duties, and the carrying of water was one in which they would take peculiar pleasure, for it would give them an opportunity for meeting their companions and of having some pleasant conversation. We shall never forget the eight or ten female water carriers whom we saw at a spring at Nazareth, and the pleasure they enjoyed in meeting each other. In this case, Eliezer fixed his own sign. Not the one who should first offer her services, but the one who grants the service asked of her. The one who would tender her services might be enticed by the wealth of the retinue, and be a little officious. The well may be deep, and to draw from the well or to go up and down the steps carrying water for so many camels, would be no easy task. If he should ask for a "sip" and she should tell him to "drink" and then offer to quench the thirst of his weary camels, this will be evidence to him of a kind, generous heart. "What Eliezer wanted for his young master was not beauty or talent, but a ready and unfailing outflow of sympathy and kindness. He sought not merely for a gentle nature, a kind heart, but for a heart so rich in kindness that it should run even beyond what was asked, and be ready to anticipate the request with new devices of happiness. The lively, light-hearted kindness that could not be content with waiting on the thirsty old man, but, with cheerful alacrity, took

upon herself the care of all the ten camels, this was a gift beyond that of beauty."

"Before he had done speaking," or as he says elsewhere, "before I had done speaking *in my heart,*" from which we infer it was a mental and not an audible prayer, there came an answer. "So forward is God to bestow his benefits upon us that they do not so much follow our prayers as prevent and go before them."

Scarcely was his prayer over, when a beautiful damsel is seen approaching the well with her pitcher on her shoulder. Attracted by her fair face and kindly bearing, the servant proceeds to apply his test, hoping, no doubt, that this lovely lady is the one appointed for his master. As she came up the steps from the well of water with the full pitcher on her shoulder, the servant ran to meet her and said, "Let me sip, I pray thee, a little water out of thy pitcher." But she answered very kindly and politely, "Drink, my lord," and put the pitcher down upon his hand that he might be able to quench his thirst. Had she stopped with this, it would have been a commendable act, but not the one who had been chosen for the master's family. Scarcely was this done, when, out of the abundance of a generous heart, she said, "I will draw water for thy camels also, until they have done drinking. And she hasted, and emptied his pitcher into the trough, and ran again unto the well to draw water, and drew for all his camels." What a picture that would have been for an artist! Ten camels at the trough, possibly on their knees, after a long abstinence, drinking with intense satisfaction the water which they now find; while this kind-hearted maiden is busy emptying her pitcher and filling it again, thinking nothing of the labor, that she may quench the thirst of these half famished camels. As Eliezer looked at this manifestation, is it at all strange that, "the man wondering at her, held his peace, to know whether the Lord had made his journey prosperous or not"?

As a token of his appreciation of what she had done, and possibly to prepare the way for further inquiries, he presented her with a nose-ring of gold, which is often given to a bride on her betrothal, and which is still worn by the women of Arabia. Following this, he gave her two golden bracelets of more value than the other. Such ornaments, and others of various kinds, are very generally used in the East to this day. A woman may have very indifferent clothing, but be adorned with bracelets, anklets, nose-

rings, and other ornaments which would purchase many dresses. He then inquired of the maiden whose daughter she was, and whether or not there was room in her father's house for him and his people to spend the night. She reported that she was the daughter of Bethuel, who was the son of his master's brother, and she furthermore tells him that there is room for him and his men, and "straw and provender" for his camels. The servant saw such a wonderful leading of Providence that he "bowed his head, and worshipped the Lord, and he said, Blessed be the Lord God of my master Abraham, who hath not left destitute my master of his mercy and his truth; I being in the way, the Lord led me to the house of my master's brethren."

The damsel ran back to her mother's home and told them all that had happened at the well. One may well imagine the delight with which she exhibited the rich jewelry, that had so unexpectedly come to her. Laban, the brother, hears of the rich caravan at the well, and sees proof of the same on the person of his sister. What we learn of the after life of this man shows him to have been a man of mercenary spirit, with a keen eye to his own interests, and it may not be misjudging to infer that the kindness shown in this case was not so much due to the promptings of a generous heart as to the gain or glory which might come from entertaining an embassador traveling with such a retinue and freely giving away his jewelry. The narrative further tells us, "And it came to pass, when he saw the earring [nose-ring] and the bracelets upon his sister's hand, and when he heard the words of Rebekah his sister, saying, Thus spake the man unto me, that he came unto the man; and, behold, he stood by the camels at the well. And he [Laban] said, Come in, thou blessed of the Lord; wherefore standest thou without? for I have prepared the house, and room for the camels. And the man came into the house: and he ungirded the camels, and gave straw and provender for the camels, and water to wash his feet, and the men's feet that were with him. And there was set meat before him to eat: but he said, I will not eat until I have told mine errand."

So Eliezer proceeds to tell the whole story of his mission up to the present hour; how the Lord had blessed his master Abraham, the oath he had taken to his master not to take a wife for Isaac from the Canaanites, his promise that the Lord would direct

him, the prayer that he had uttered at the well, and the apparent fulfillment in the generous and beautiful young maiden who had come to the well; and he thus ends his story, "And I bowed my head, and worshipped the Lord, and blessed the Lord God of my master Abraham, which had led me in the right way to take my master's brother's daughter unto his son. And now if ye will deal kindly and truly with my master, tell me; and if not, tell me; that I may turn to the right hand, or to the left." Everything indicated in his opinion that Rebekah was the person chosen of God to be Isaac's wife. The father and brother are of the same opinion, and they thus express their own judgment: "The thing proceedeth from the Lord: we cannot speak unto thee bad or good. Behold, Rebekah is before thee, take her, and go, and let her be the wife of thy master's son as the Lord has spoken."

All this seems strange to us. A servant is sent to find a wife for his master's son. He has full power to conclude the whole contract. He addresses himself to the father and brother of the young lady desired, and they make the agreement without consulting Rebekah at all. He carries her off and Isaac and Rebekah meet each other as husband and wife, without ever having seen each other before. However strange such customs and usages may seem to us, they still prevail in the East. In Persia to-day, if a young man wishes to marry, his parents look about among their kindred for a suitable partner. When one is found, his parents proceed to the home of her father and make propositions to him. If acceptable to him, he orders sweetmeats to be brought. A few days later another meeting is held, and it is finally settled what the parents will give for the daughter. These gifts remain with her and form her dower if divorced, hence they become an important matter. Sometimes the woman's consent is asked, but usually she has no power to negative the contract.

The servant bows himself once more in thankfulness to his God who has granted him such wonderful success. And now many precious things such as "jewels of silver and jewels of gold and raiment" are brought forth and given to Rebekah, and some also to the mother and brother, probably as a part of the dower usually given to the daughter. It would be easy for such a suitor as this to find hospitable entertainment. What a picture this must have been as the family examined the rich goods and the valuable

jewelry which this representative of his wealthy master had brought with him. Eliezer and the men with him retire for the night and they sleep soundly; and well they may, for not only are they tired and weary, but the journey has been a successful one, and their hearts are glad. But how did the young Rebekah sleep? During the silent watches of that night, did she not think earnestly of the wonderful experiences which had come to her during the last twenty-four hours? Will not any thoughtful maiden have a strange flood of emotions when she pledges her life to another, and thus for all time places her destiny in his hands? And while in this case the contract was made by others, as was the custom, it affected her destiny and she could not be indifferent to it.

Early in the morning the household was astir, and Eliezer says, "Send me away unto my master." The mission is accomplished and there is no need of further delay. Besides that, he wishes to make report of the result at as early period as possible. The mother and brother ask that they remain a few days, so as to accustom their thoughts to this new experience in their household, but Eliezer requests that they hinder him not. The matter is referred to Rebekah whether she will go at once or remain a few days longer; on that reply hangs much of her destiny, but she has thought it all over during the night, and her conclusion has been reached. "She said, I will go. And they sent away Rebekah, their sister, and her nurse, and Abraham's servant, and his men. And they blessed Rebekah and said unto her, Thou art our sister, be thou the mother of thousands of millions, and let thy seed possess the gate of those which hate thee."

This whole transaction, in the main, seems to have been conducted in a religious spirit. The farewells were taken, and the caravan started on its return trip. Rebekah leaves the pleasant home and journeys over five hundred miles, through an unknown country, to meet and marry a man whom she had never seen. So long as her hand keeps fast hold of the divine hand, she may go forth cheerfully. We have no account of this journey, nor of the incidents that occurred on the way. Abraham seems to be living at or near the well of Lahai-roi. Isaac comes here and tarries here, probably to await the return of the servant who went to seek a wife for him. At the eventide, in keeping with his religious character and meditative disposition, he had gone forth to pray,

REBEKAH AND ELIEZER

"to give scope to the pious sentiments of his heart in a retired place at the tranquil hour of twilight, when the soul is most disposed for devout contemplations. Isaac could not have put himself in a more suitable posture for welcoming the anticipated blessing than that in which he is here represented, nor in one which would have been more apt to insure its being made substantial and durable."

Rebekah is no dreamer, but an active, wide-awake, young woman. She was prompt and ready to act in her hospitality at the well; she was ready in due time to give prompt answer if she would go in the morning. She sees this man in the open fields, and no doubt soon learns or suspects who it is. According to custom, she covers herself with a veil, possibly to prevent any confusion which might occur from too sudden an exposure, but more likely because she is coming as an espoused wife. She at once alighted from the camel, as it would have been a breach of Oriental etiquette to have remained thereon when presented to him. The servant rehearses the story of his journey. Isaac had never seen this woman until she stood in his tent as his wife. With a touch of pathos the story tells us "he loved her." The comfort of a wife will now compensate for the loss of a mother, whom three years before he had helped to bury. While God afflicts on one hand, he cheers and consoles and binds up on the other. So beautiful and so religious has seemed this whole affair, from the inception to its final consummation, that many Christian churches use it as a model of a marriage according to the divine will. "Send thy blessing upon these, thy servants, this man and this woman whom we bless in thy name; that as Isaac and Rebekah lived faithfully together, so these persons may surely perform and keep the vow and covenant between them."

Isaac was forty years of age when he married, and now nineteen years have passed and he has no heir. He entreats the Lord for children and his prayer is answered. He is informed that his wife shall give birth to two children, who shall be the founders of nations, and that the elder shall serve the younger. The first was named Esau, meaning "hairy," and the second Jacob, "supplanter," because at birth he had laid hold of his brother's heel. As they grew up, Esau seemed to be fond of the sports of the field, and became an expert in hunting, while Jacob was more domestic in

his nature, and followed the occupation of a shepherd. As the mother had been informed, so, no doubt, Jacob knew, that he was to be the heir of the promise. One day he finds his brother tired and weary, and he buys of him his right to the birthright privileges. We cannot approve of what Jacob did, and yet we must remember to judge him by the tone of the age in which he lived. He did not do a brotherly act, and yet we may not forget that the man who sold it had no appreciation of its value. It proved to be a serious affair in the end, and came very near being the beginning of a lifelong enmity between these brothers. Some time after this, there was a famine in the land, and Isaac went into the country of the Philistines near Gerar. He evidently was intending to go to Egypt, but was divinely hindered. With his mild, delicate character, he would not be able to withstand the temptations, nor to encounter the perils which he would likely meet. The Lord repeats to him the promises which he had made to Abraham, and will give him the land whereon he is now sojourning. Here he falls into the same weakness which had dishonored his father. Because of Rebekah's beauty he was afraid they would kill him, and so he passes his wife as his sister. It was not an absolute falsehood, for she was his cousin and the term "brother" and "sister" as used by them indicated any kind of kindred. Yet it was calculated to leave a wrong impression. By an accident, the king learned of the true relationship, and reproved Isaac for thus endangering his people. Isaac remained here some time, and tilled the fields and grew great in herds and servants. The Philistines around envied him, and to express their dissatisfied feelings, filled up the wells so as thereby to destroy his flocks which could not exist without water. In order to prevent trouble among the servants, the king advised Isaac to move farther away, which he did, and open up one of the wells of his father, but still the trouble continued. He removed farther until he reached Beersheba where Abraham had dwelt. He builded an altar and tarried there. A covenant was made with the king of Abimelech that they would be friends to each other. While here, Esau shocked the feelings of both his father and his mother by marrying two wives out of the heathen women about him, the very thing which Abraham had taken special pains to avoid in the case of his own child. The domestic jars which grew out of this ill-assorted union may have

helped not a little to estrangement from his mother, and led on to results which proved somewhat serious.

"The mother still opened the door to the hunting son, but it did not go back with the old swing; the mother still looked upon that well-built, noble form, but she wished that the interior of his nature had been at this instance equal to the mold and fashion which nature had bestowed upon his physical frame. A wounded spirit, who can bear? This alienation is not a matter of arms, and revenge, and bitter speeches, and reproaches which ease the very heart that launches them upon its object; this was an instance of grief of mind, sorrow of heart, a wounded spirit for which there is no balm."

Isaac has now reached probably his one hundred and thirty-seventh year, and is visited with extreme weakness and loss of eyesight. He expects soon to die, and before he does, prepares to confirm his final blessing. He is weak and feeble, and in spite of Esau's bad conduct, he is still the object of his father's partiality. He sends him to secure some food, to which he was specially partial, and after partaking of that, he will bestow upon him the paternal blessing. When Esau is gone to the field, the mother, who had heard all, reports the same to Jacob, and she instructs him to go to the flock and bring two goats, and she will prepare them so that the father may bless him instead of Esau. Jacob seems to see an impropriety in the act, and says of his father, "I shall seem to him as a deceiver." The mother insists that he go forward and obey her and says, "Upon me be thy curse, my son."

There is a difference of opinion as to how much blame we should attach to Rebekah in a matter of this kind. Many women, if convinced there was a divine promise of good to their own favorite son, would have rested in quiet faith believing that God would accomplish his own purpose, but Rebekah was not of this kind. It would be a great wrong to confer spiritual leadership upon one so manifestly incompetent as Esau, and hence good, easy, doting Isaac must not be allowed to interfere with God's plans. "It is quite possible that she thought she was doing her duty. She was preventing a wrong, doing evil that good might come of it. It was a pious fraud and when we consider how dubious great authorities —favored with all the light of Christian morality and doctrine— have been on the subject of such frauds, we need not too greatly

wonder that Rebekah and Jacob failed to see the path of right and duty clearly. It appears to us that Rebekah felt all to be right, both means and ends; and that Jacob thought the end to be right, but was staggered at the means until his mother succeeded in soothing, if not in extinguishing, his alarms." He was, however, full forty years of age and must take the responsibility of his own actions. The plan came near failing, but the father's misgivings as to the voice were overcome, and the much desired blessing was bestowed.

"We must not force Providence. Is there not a time for the rising of the sun, and going down of the same? Is there not a seedtime in the year, as well as a harvest day? We are tempted to force Providence, thus, to do the right thing in the wrong way and at the wrong time. . . . It is tempting to natures like ours to help ourselves by trickery. We do like to meddle with God. Granted that the mother saw the religious aspect of this whole case, and knew the destiny of the boy, she had no right to force divine Providence. The vineyard is yours, every cluster of grapes is yours; but do not touch one atom of fruit till the sun has wrought his ripening ministry upon it. We may not touch even things that are our own until the right time comes. We know this in the field, we know it in many mercantile transactions, but it seems impossible to carry up that knowledge into the highest religious applications. We cannot wait because we are impatient, and our impatience is but one phase of our ignorance."

How little do we know the consequences of a single act! When Rebekah said, "Upon me be the curse," she had no adequate conception as to what results would follow. Jacob was soon sent from home to save him from the vengeance of an outraged brother. The mother supposed she was sending him for a little while, but the probability is, she never saw his face again. He fled to the house of Laban, his uncle, and agreed to serve him seven years for Rachel. When the time comes for consummation of this agreement, the cruel father gives him the wrong daughter. Thus early has the deceit, practiced upon his own father, returned upon himself. But this is not all; he seems doomed to misfortune. He says in after years to one of his wives, "Your father hath deceived me and changed my wages ten times." The severest thing is yet to come. His own children conspired to injure the child of

his affections, their own best brother, and then reported that he was lost. The coat which they had dipped in blood, helped to complete the deception. For many years his life was saddened because of the loss of his child, and the gloom was not lifted entirely when he found him again and thereby knew that his own children had cruelly deceived him. The wrong which he had practiced upon others came back in time upon himself.

Notwithstanding the fact that Esau had sold to Jacob his birthright, which carried with it the blessing of his father, yet, when he found what Jacob had done, he was very angry and planned to murder his brother as soon as his father should depart. By thus suppressing his resentment for a time, he did show some feeling for his father, but had no consideration for the grief of his mother. The mother hears of this and, in order to save Jacob, sends him away for a few days "until thy brother's fury turn away." Rebekah had been successful, but it "was a success that embittered the whole life, both of Jacob and his parents. Rebekah, the contriver of the cause, was deprived of her favorite son, probably for the rest of her days. He who should have been the stay and consolation of her declining years, was a stranger in a distant land. Nor did the evil terminate here. Instead of the elder serving the younger, Jacob was now a banished stranger, a wandering fugitive, in continual terror of his enraged brother."

To Rebekah, there must have come a feeling of loneliness almost like a bereavement. Jacob is gone and Esau could not have felt very kindly toward her after he learned the part which she had taken with Jacob in plotting against him so great a fraud. In a little while, finding his marriages were not pleasant to his parents, he provides for himself a separate home. So soon was the tent of Isaac and Rebekah bereft of both their sons! Isaac was old and blind and burdened with other infirmities. Rebekah herself was no longer young, and the joys of her life were being turned into bitterness. In seeking to promote the prosperity of her son and the good of the household, she had made a misstep and brought sorrow and misfortune on all.

At this point the record of Rebekah ceases. In all probability she died before Jacob returned from the East, but the sacred historian fails to give any account of either her death or burial. Is it possible, after all, that she died with a broken heart? Jacob did

not return to visit her while in Haran. When he did come, we have no record of his having made inquiries about her, nor did he seek her grave. When he came to his more sober moments, did he not in his heart of hearts condemn the efforts which she had put forth for him, and did it not weaken his affection for her? On his way to Bethel, Deborah, Rebekah's nurse, died, and was buried there and great mourning was made for her. How she was transferred from Isaac's family to Jacob's we do not know, but more than likely when Rebekah died. She may have gone back to Haran to meet them, or have found him after his return to his own land. When Jacob comes to die (Genesis 49: 31), he reveals to us incidentally the fact that his mother, Rebekah, along with his father, Isaac, was buried in the cave Machpelah.

"Her death was in all probability one of peace and calm, holy reliance on the infinite mercy of God. He had chastened, but in the midst of chastisement had mercy; the fury of Esau had been turned aside, Jacob had been saved, and peace prevailed in the household of Isaac. Her earthly idol removed from her sight, we may well believe that Rebekah returned to her domestic duties with that singleness of purpose and uprightness of heart which had marked her earlier years. The temptation to turn aside, the loving mercy of the Eternal had remained, and the mother, even while her heart bled, must have pronounced the mandate just. If in her youth, before the knowledge of the God of Abraham had been imparted, she had felt with her brother, 'It is the Lord, we cannot speak unto thee bad or good,' would she not—now that long years had been passed in his service—have felt even in her affliction, 'It is the Lord,' and without murmur or complaint submit herself to his will?"

The following poem is a picture of Rebekah's farewell to Jacob as he leaves home to avoid his brother's anger:

"And must thou go, my darling son?
Light of thy mother's eyes;
Her brightest hopes of future bliss,
Her dearest earthly pride?
How many thoughts at this sad hour
Are thronging on my mind,
To draw more tight the cords of love
Around my heart entwined.
For thou wast ever at my side,
A comfort and a stay—

Thy brother like a roaming deer
A wanderer far away.
And I had thought in death's dark hour
To know that thou wast near,
To have thy soft and soothing tones
Fall sweetly on my ear,
To cheer me through the darksome road
Which leadeth to the grave,
And that thy hands would lay me low
In dark Machpelah's cave.
But thou must go—no more my ear
Shall hear thy gentle tone;
And I must live through weary years
Sad, childless, and alone.
No light from thee shall dissipate
Death's dark and fearful gloom;
And strangers' hands shall coldly lay
Thy mother in thy tomb.
Nay, shrink not thou, my darling boy,
Nor tremble with a dread;
The blessing only rests on thee,
The curse is on my head.
Mine is the sin and punishment;
God's benison is thine;
O'er thee will heaven's dews be spent,
Earth yield its corn and wine;
Nations and tribes before thy feet
Shall bend the humble knee,
Thy brother's tribe and kindred all
Be bondsmen unto thee.
This have I gained for thee, my son:
Who blesseth thee, is blessed;
And him who dares to curse thy soul,
On him shall curses rest.
And when thy brother's rage is cooled,
His anger died away,
And from thy father's house
No longer need'st thou stay,
What though I may not see thy face
Or hear thy loving tone,
One comfort still is left to me—
I bear the curse alone."

"The managing, self-reliant Rebekah, ready to do her full share in every emergency, and to run before any occasion with her busy plannings, is not a character of patriarchal ages merely. Every age has repeated it, and our own is no exception. There are not wanted among us cheerful, self-confident, domestic managers, who might take a lesson from the troubles that befell the good-hearted but too busy and officious Rebekah in consequence of the success of her own schemes."

Rachel---the Beloved

"So we return to our starting-point. Life is varied: sometimes a dream all light; sometimes a vision of blue heavens, a great cloudless day, or a night burning with innumerable stars, lamps of an unseen sanctuary; sometimes a transfiguration; sometimes a holy ecstasy; sometimes a vale of tears, a place of weeping; a desert of sand, a sea all storm; sometimes extraordinary, all but supernatural, without one trace of commonness or familiarity upon it; and then servitude sheep-tending, field-culture, monotony, rising in the morning, going the daily round, returning at night weary, eating the bread of industry and sleeping the sleep of honesty—a commonplace, dull, pendulum life. So be it. It is not mine to choose my life."

—*Dr. Joseph Parker.*

Rachel—the Beloved

ONE hundred years before the period of which we now write, Eliezer, the head servant of Abraham, was near the city of Nahor, seeking a wife for Isaac. The marriage of Isaac and Rebekah was as nearly the type of Christian marriage as anything of which we have record, in these early times. No other wife ever shared his heart or his home. It was very important to Abraham that his son should be properly mated, as he was the heir of the promises which God had made. While they were not of the highest moral excellence, he knew the value of the stock from which they came, and a wife from his own people would be infinitely better than any of the heathen women by whom he was surrounded.

From this union came twin boys, Jacob and Esau. The latter was the first to enter the world in the same birth. So far as the birthright privileges were concerned, this was as good as a large number of years would have been. In his providential dealings with the world, God does not seem to have attached any special importance to priority of birth. The righteous Abel is the youngest son of Adam; Abraham of Terah; Jacob of Isaac; Joseph is the youngest but one of Jacob's twelve; Ephraim is the youngest of Joseph's sons; Moses is the youngest of Amram's sons; David is the youngest of Jesse's sons; and Solomon is the youngest of David's sons. These sons of Isaac were born most likely when they lived at the well of Lahai-roi. Isaac was probably about forty years of age when he was married, and these sons were born when he was about sixty. The record in Genesis 25:21 would seem to indicate that their birth was supernatural. The wife was supernaturally informed that her offspring should be the founders of two nations, and that the elder should serve the younger. These facts must be considered when we come to make up our minds as to the judgment which should be pronounced upon her in her efforts to aid Jacob in securing his birthright.

As the boys grew to manhood, there seemed to be a wonderful difference in their natures. One appears to partake more of the gentle, retiring manner of the father. He is patient, prudent, submissive, loving the delights of the home and the occupations and interests of pastoral life. The other was rough, ruddy, and hairy, implying great bodily strength, desiring the stimulants of the chase, the wild hunter, the ranger of the mountains, the very man to become the chief of a predatory tribe; yet a man of generous impulse, affectionate to his father, forgiving to his brother, open-handed and chivalrous. He was one of that class of men who, "acting under the influence of present impulse, have no steadiness of character. They are distinguished by an imposing directness of conduct, the very opposite to anything deceitful or cunning. They have feeling and kindness; they readily forget an injury and cherish no malice. These amiable qualities are associated, however, with levity, sensuality, and passion, leading to acts of violence as circumstances may prompt."

Rebekah, the mother, understands that the elder is to serve the younger, and so she proceeds to secure the birthright blessing for Jacob. She makes all the arrangements, and Jacob is the instrument in her hands. Before this time, he had driven a sharp bargain with his brother, whom he found almost famishing; he took advantage of his weakness and, for a mess of pottage, induced him to dispose of his birthright. There is no justifiable defense for this act of the mother in cheating her husband and depriving her eldest son of what justly belonged to him, but there are extenuating circumstances which go to show that a good purpose, no doubt, was back of it all. It was evidently the divine plan that Jacob should inherit the promises, but God's resources are unlimited, and we are never justifiable in resorting to wicked or questionable means to help him carry out his plans. "Through all the faults and errors of the mere human actors runs the thread of a divine guidance." Before the birth of Jacob it was predicted that he should be the chosen head of the forming nation, and by his mother's artifice and his own participation in it, that prediction is fulfilled; yet the natural punishment of the action follows. Esau is alienated and meditates murder in his heart; and Jacob, though the mother's darling, is driven out from his home a hunted fugitive, parted from her for life. He starts on foot and finds his

way to Padan-aram, to his father's kindred, there to seek and meet and woo the wife appointed for him.

When Esau saw how he had been deceived by his brother, he meditated killing him. The words were told the mother, and she urged Jacob to flee to her brother Laban until Esau's anger had passed away, which she knew it would, and then she would send for him again. In order to facilitate matters with the father and to frame a justifiable reason for Jacob's absence, she urges that if Jacob should, like Esau, marry of the women about her, "what good shall my life do me?" Good, easy, unsuspecting Isaac is satisfied with the forethought and planning of his wife, so he calls Jacob, commissions him to go forth and find a wife among his kindred, and invokes the divine blessing upon him. Little did that mother know it would be twenty or more long years before he would return, and that she would never see his face again.

Jacob now starts from Beersheba for Haran, a journey of some four hundred and fifty miles. The route was through a country in many places desert and savage, and in others dangerous from hostile tribes that dwelt in or ranged through it. He went out alone without a beast to carry him or a servant to attend him, and with no accommodation save his "staff" as he afterwards tells us. He may have stolen away secretly, without any retinue, and have shunned the frequented path in order to escape the vigilance of his brother, whom he had reason to fear would take his life. "Who is this solitary traveler striding on from the way of the southern wilderness? His loins are firmly girded, a staff assists his steps, and naught else with him, unless it be his small wallet that contains a little oil, some bread, and a few hard dates. This is no common man. Mighty destinies hang around his head. A special and peculiar providence watches over him. Angels bend from their starry heaven to look upon him. It is Jacob, the son of the wealthy Isaac, the undoubted heir of glorious promises, the chosen and loved of God. And how is it thus with him? The servant of Abraham traveled this way before, bent on the same journey with ten laden camels and many men. Could not even one camel, one ass, one servant be spared for Isaac's son? Alas, he flees for his life and must leave no track behind him. Hence he goes alone, stealthily, and poor."

"His reflections on this journey must have been pungent in the extreme. It must have been with many a bitter pang that he prosecuted his journey. He cannot but feel that he himself has been the architect of his present lonely, destitute, and perilous condition. Had it not been for his criminal impatience and the sinful stratagem to which it led, he would not probably have excited his brother's hatred or subjected himself to exile from the home of his childhood. We here behold the heir of promise, in whom all the families of the earth would be blessed, a forlorn wanderer, banished from his father's house, his whole inheritance his staff in hand. Oppressed with a desolating sense of his loneliness, and inwardly pained with the compunctious visitings of his faithful conscience, he must often have asked himself on his dreary route, 'Why am I here?'"

"Now we begin with Jacob in earnest. Life is spared, but is the punishment evaded? The supplanter has apparently succeeded, whereas he has but begun the discipline of purification and refinement; he has gone at his mother's bidding, but instead of having escaped God, he has run more consciously and completely into his hands. Here also is a mystery, black as a night cloud, and yet not without some wealth of stars in all its appalling gloom. Jacob had undertaken this journey on his mother's advice, with a narrow policy of allowing Esau's anger to subside. She was minimizing providence into a local incident; she had undertaken too much. We cannot put our arms around the horizon; we are under seven feet at the most. Rebekah little knew about the door she was opening when she bade her son goodby. She opened the universe. The supplanter has gone to meet Laban; he will meet the Lord before he meets Laban. God is waiting at the sleeping place and the revelation is already prepared. We require the darkness for the revelation of some things; we do not see the stars while the sun is blinding us; we speak flippantly of the day, we forget the night."

"He lighted on *the* place," not of his own purpose, but in consequence of a providential ordering. His grandfather, Abraham, had built an altar here many years before. It was near Bethel, some eight miles north of Jerusalem, and about fifty-five miles from the place where he started. It was probably toward the third day of his journey that he reaches this place. He no doubt

intended to reach the city before sunset, but delayed beyond his expectations; and, finding the gates shut upon his arrival, he was under the necessity of lodging in the open field, in the suburbs of the city. Travelers are compelled to do so even to this day. It was no hardship for him to take a stone for a pillow, for the inhabitants of Syria and Palestine do that every night. Sleeping in the open air without even a bush for a shelter, is no uncommon thing. He unbinds his girdle, takes a little of his hard fare, drinks some water from the brook, and lies down, but not to sleep. God does not mean he should do that. No doubt he has kept this man's thoughts busy with his past life. It is not likely that Jacob commended his soul to God, for he did not know God was in that place. The light which had been kindled in the mind of Abraham had lost some of its fullness and clearness in reaching Jacob. Here is a picture of many a young man who has left home and gone away from God, and done that which he would willingly forget. But as God forsakes none of his children, so he was near to this man and began to prepare him for the destiny which awaited him. From a pillow of stones may come our brightest visions. Paul, confined in the Roman dungeon, saw the crown of life laid up for him. When Stephen was stoned, he saw the heavens opened and Jesus on the right hand of God.

As he lies there half asleep, the hills upon which he has gazed reappear one upon another like the steps of a ladder, and the angels are traveling up and down the luminous path before him. It was a visible symbol to him that, notwithstanding his apparent loneliness, communication was still opened between earth and heaven. "Jacob had thought himself alone; the vision peoples the wilderness. He had felt himself defenseless; the vision musters armies for his safety. He has been groveling on earth with no thoughts beyond its fleeting goods; the vision lifts his eyes from the low level on which they have been gazing. He had been conscious of but little connection with heaven; the vision shows him a path from his right side into its depth." Standing above that ladder is a visible form, which says to him, "I am the Lord God of Abraham, thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed; and thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south:

and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of. And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not. And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven. And Jacob rose up early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put for his pillows, and set it up for a pillar, and poured oil upon the top of it. . . . And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace; then shall the Lord be my God: and this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house: and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee."

"It is worthy of notice how moderate Jacob's wishes are for himself; how low the personal ambitions of the man who had dared so much for the great future. All that he asks is to be supplied with what is absolutely and indispensably necessary; food, however hardly earned, so that it sustains life; clothing, however coarse, so that it but covers his nakedness. He is ready to submit to every privation and suffering, so that he may be sure that he shall eventually return in peace to his father's house. What a chapter is this for those who go forth even in our day to battle with the world."

"In one night how much is born in that soul! The sentiment of reverence, awe of the divine, a conviction of the reality of God and an invisible world, and the beginning of that great experiment by which man learns practically that God is his father. For in the outset every human being's consciousness of God must be just of this sort. Have I a Father in heaven? Does he care for me? Will he help me? Questions that each man can only answer as Jacob did, by casting himself upon God in a matter-of-fact, practical way, in the exigencies of this present life. And this history is more valuable because it takes man in his earlier stages of imperfection. We are apt to feel that it might be safe for Paul or Isaiah or other great saints to expect God to befriend them; but

now a poor, uncouth shepherd boy, who is not religious, avows that, up to this time, he has had no sense of God, and yet between him and heaven there is a pathway and about him in his loneliness are ministering spirits; and the God of Abraham and Isaac is ready to become his friend. In an important sense, this night-dream, this gracious promise of God to Jacob, is not merely for him, but for all erring, helpless, suffering sons of men. In the fatherly God thus revealed to the patriarch, we see the first fruits of the promise, that through him all nations should be blessed."

On the morrow he starts forward on his journey with about four hundred miles to travel, but he starts forth a new man. He is not the same Jacob who, tired and weary and conscience stricken, lay down the night before with a stone for his pillow and the sky above him for his covering. The record says, "He lifted up his feet and came into the land of the people of the east." There were many days of travel before him ere he should reach the place of his destination, and much of uncertainty, danger, and fatigue would attend his way; yet such was the influence of the divine promise and protection which he had just heard, that he proceeded on his journey with alacrity and joy. The effect of his feeling on the remainder of the journey is hinted at in the very brevity with which the story records it. A single verse tells the whole story: "The joy of the Lord was Jacob's strength; it became as oil wherewith his soul being supplied, he was made more alive, nimble, and fit for action. He that is once soaked in this oil and bathed with Jacob in this bath of Bethel, will cheerfully do or suffer aught for God's sake."

About the old well in Haran, shepherds are waiting with their flocks. In the East, wells are very valuable property and are usually covered to prevent their being choked up by drifting sand. It might have been that they did not desire to expose the well, that the shepherds did not water their flocks until all were assembled. When the well is private property, as this may have been, and in a neighborhood where water is scarce, it is sometimes kept locked to prevent parties from fraudulently watering from it. It has been conjectured that this was Laban's own well, and that the shepherds dared not open the well until Laban's daughter came with her father's flocks. As it was early in the day, Jacob

wondered why they were not watered and turned out to pasture, but they could not be until all the flocks were gathered.

Jacob had learned from the shepherds of the welfare of his uncle, Laban. While he talked to them, Rachel, the daughter, who had been pointed out to him, came up with her father's sheep. This was no unusual thing in that day and country. Much of the drudgery was placed upon the women, and is yet in much of the East. Among the Arabs and other nomadic nations, the care of the flocks devolves upon the women or the servants. Among some of the tribes it is the exclusive business of the young unmarried women to drive the cattle to pasture. "These young women set out before sunrise, three or four together, carrying some water or victuals with them, and they do not return until late in the evening. Throughout the day they continue exposed to the sun, watching the sheep with great care, for they are sure to be severely beaten by their father should any be lost. These young women are, in general, civil to persons who pass by, and ready enough to share with them their victuals and milk. They are fully able to protect their flocks against any ordinary depredation or danger, for their way of life makes them as hardy and vigorous as men."

It was with feelings of special interest after this long and toilsome journey that Jacob looked upon the daughter of his mother's brother; and in proffering his aid to water the flocks, he was influenced by a warmer feeling of kindness than he would have manifested to any other strangers. As this work was performed twice a day, it was no little favor which he showed this gracious damsel in rolling away the stone and watering the flocks. In accordance with the simple manners of the times he kissed his cousin and the tears found their way down his cheek. The emotions which agitated his heart were mingled with sorrow of the past and thanksgiving for the joys of the present. Everything about him seemed to call up tender memories of his mother, whom he dearly loved, and who as earnestly loved him. Rachel herself, in all her maiden beauty and innocence, was a reminder of the time when the servant of Abraham came to that same country and found his mother. These very flocks belonging to her brother called up the same image. From this scene he might pass in memory to his own circumstances, why he was here in a distant land among strangers, people whom he had never seen before, here

for a particular purpose and without those means usually considered essential to success. With all the memories of the past pressing upon him, increased by the wonderful experiences through which he had passed at Bethel, is it any wonder that the historian represents him as giving vent to the burden of his heart through a flood of tears?

No doubt this conduct on the part of a stranger surprised Rachel; but when he had relieved his heart by his outburst of grief, he tells her that he is Rebekah's son, her own cousin. Overjoyed by such news, she runs at once to communicate with her father. When Laban hears the joyful story he runs to meet him and embraces him and brings him to his house. He relates to Laban the incidents of his journey and the purpose for which he is here. If the opinion of some commentators be true, it must have been nearly one hundred years since Rebekah had gone out from her home, but her memory must have been enshrined in that of her brother as well as cherished by his children, for Jacob was so warmly and delightfully welcomed simply because he was "Rebekah's son." During this time, Laban had grown to manhood. As husband and father, he had other calls upon his heart, but the memory of the sister of his childhood, the companion of his early years, had remained strong as if no absence had come between them. This man had traits of character which were narrow and hard, but his affection for his long-absent sister revealed a good side of his nature. Would there have been such a friendly interest if their early youth had not been passed in confidence and faithful affection?

Two daughters, Leah and Rachel, blessed this home of Laban. The characteristics of these two are less vividly given than those of the patriarchal women. They are not sharply defined characters like the others. They were Jacob's wives, and mothers of the twelve tribes of Israel. The sacred historian says, "Leah was tender-eyed, and Rachel beautiful and well favored." Some suppose the word translated "tender" does not signify weak as is usually thought, but soft and delicate, and that her eyes were her only good feature, but her younger sister was of exceeding beauty in other respects. It is more than likely, however, that it was some natural blemish, or some distemper of the eye which greatly injured the countenance. Jacob had been here in this family about

a month. During this time he had employed himself about his uncle's business, but nothing had been said about any wages. It was Laban's place to speak and not Jacob's. Accordingly, Laban intimates that he does not want to take advantage of his relationship to obtain gratuitous services from him. "Tell me what shall thy wages be?" This served to bring out a declaration of his love for Rachel. "I will serve thee seven years for Rachel, thy younger daughter."

All this seems very unlike our modern customs, but it was, and is yet, in keeping with the habits of the eastern world. Jacob offered his services, for he had no goods which he could give the father for his daughter. The custom was not for the bride to bring a dower to the bridegroom, but for the bridegroom in a sense to purchase of the father the girl whom he intends to marry. Among the Bedouins, "when a young man meets with a girl to his taste, he asks her of her father through one of his relations; they now treat about the number of camels, sheep, or horses, for the Bedouins never save any money, and their wealth consists only in cattle. A man that marries must therefore literally purchase his wife, and the fathers are most fortunate who have many daughters. They are the principal riches of the family."

The custom for an unprovided young man to serve the father whose daughter he sought in marriage, has been found by travelers to exist in many countries distant from each other. What Jacob offered therefore was in keeping with the custom of the times. Buckhardt, in his "Travels in Syria," relates the following among other similar facts: "I once met a young man who had served eight years for his food only; at the expiration of that period, he obtained in marriage a daughter of his master, for whom he would otherwise have had to pay seven or eight hundred piastres. When I saw him, he had been married three years, but he bitterly complained of his father-in-law who continued to require of him the performance of the most servile offices without paying him anything, and thus prevented him from setting up for himself and family."

Laban concedes that it is better to give her to Jacob than to another man, and asks him to remain. The whole affair is managed without any consultation with the maiden at all. Her likes and dislikes need not be taken into the account. The whole trans-

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action is a business-like arrangement on the part of the father. "The propriety of giving a female in marriage to the nearest relative who can lawfully marry her, is to this day generally admitted among the Bedouin and other Oriental tribes. Jacob was first cousin to Laban's daughters, and according to existing Arab usages, he had the best possible claim to one of them in marriage. Esau had perhaps a preferable claim to the other daughter; but Jacob himself, a younger brother, had an unquestionable claim to Rachel, the younger daughter of Laban; and therefore, independently of his affection for her, it was quite in the customary course of things that he should apply for Rachel in the first instance. Among the Arabs at the present day, a man has exclusive right to the hand of his first cousin. He is not obliged to marry her, but she cannot be married to another without his consent."

It was right in Jacob to make such a proposition as he did, but if Laban had possessed the generosity and friendship which his word seemed to have expressed, he would have given him the object of his choice without compelling him to work seven years for her. He seems to have studied only his own private interest. Here is a poor man, his own nephew, son of his own sister, and who could only talk of promised blessings which sometime he should inherit. Laban lived more by sight than by faith, and determined to make the most of his opportunity. Abraham's descendants seemed to incline toward his family, and he must profit by their inclinations. Most likely Jacob had abandoned the idea of any speedy return to his own country, or he would not have contracted for so long a period.

Finally seven years have passed away, and the time seemed to Jacob but "a few days for the love he had for her." He asks for the fulfillment of the contract, and his affianced wife may now be given him. The wedding was arranged for and the accustomed feast provided. "According to the custom of those Eastern nations, the bride was conducted to the bed of her husband with silence, in darkness, and covered from head to foot with a veil, circumstances, all of them favorable to the wicked, selfish plan which Laban had formed to detain his son-in-law in his service. Leah is accordingly substituted in place of her sister. And he who by subtlety and falsehood stole away the blessing intended for his

brother, is punished for his deceit by finding a Leah when he expected a Rachel. He who employed undue advantage to arrive at the right of the firstborn, has undue advantage taken of him in having the firstborn put in the place of the younger. He who could practice upon a father's blindness, though to obtain a laudable end, is in his turn practiced upon by a father employing the cover of the night to accomplish a very unwarrantable purpose."

Of course Jacob was deceived, and he complained to Laban. Either Laban wanted to retain the services of so faithful a helper a little longer, and was sure his love for Rachel was so strong he would consent to serve longer for her; or he was anxious to make an arrangement for the daughter who was not likely to have suitors. He thought of the example and customs of the people when he says, "It must not be so done in our country to give the younger before the firstborn." All this, however, should have been considered before he made the contract with Jacob, which, having been made, should have been sacredly kept. Mr. Roberts, in speaking of the marriage customs in India, says: "When the eldest daughter is deformed, or blind, or deaf, or dumb, then the younger may be given first; but under other circumstances it would be disgraceful in the extreme. Should any one wish to alter the order of things, the answer of Laban is given. Should a father, however, have a very advantageous offer for a younger daughter, he will exert all his powers to get off the elder; but until this can be accomplished, the younger will not be married."

We pity Jacob because of this cruel deception, and yet God had a purpose in it all. "Jacob has left home as a deceiver—how will he be made to feel that? Jacob himself will be deceived as he has deceived his own father. Judgment cannot be avoided, or evaded, eluded, bribed, or deprived of its terrific but righteous force and claim. Jacob goes out and is himself deceived—the only intelligible way by which he can be taught the wickedness of deceit. Yet how surprised we are when we are made the victims of our own policy. Jacob's countenance was a picture; his face was marked all over with signs of amazement that he, of all living creatures, should be deceived. We do not like to be paid in our own coin; it does not enter into our minds that we have to reap the produce which we have sown. How soon we forget ourselves! The mark of the supplanter was upon every feature of Jacob's

face; he was a vagabond on the face of the earth; he had himself run away from the deception of his own father, and behold he says, 'What is this that thou hast done unto me?' The beautiful innocence that never put on skins that his hands might be hairy, asks Laban how it comes to pass that he, Jacob, of all guileless persons, should be deceived. Can you rob others without in turn being robbed? Can you sow bad seed and reap good crops? Is there not a God that judges in the earth?"

The younger daughter is now offered, for seven more years of service. Jacob accepts and the two sisters are married about the same time. Although married to Leah, she is not loved as is her sister. Her appearance was not prepossessing, and, in addition thereto, she must have consented to the imposition practiced upon Jacob, otherwise it could not have been so successfully carried out. She saw that she did not have the same place in her husband's affections as did Rachel, and to compensate for this, the Lord gave her children. Leah seems to have entertained a warm affection for Jacob, and hoped that in due time he would reciprocate this. The names given to the first, second, and third child indicate this, and in the birth of the fourth she seems, to some extent, to have realized her wish and to have witnessed the softening of Jacob's heart toward her, for she says, "Now will I praise the Lord."

Rachel was not pleased when she saw her sister bear children, and she, although his favorite wife, had none. The Jewish women were anxious to have children, and it was considered a very great misfortune to be barren. She may have envied her elder sister, because she feared she would secure an increased ascendency over Jacob because of her children. Rachel murmurs and pines, and in her vexations cries out to her husband, "Give me children or I die." Without them she will be as good as dead, for there will be none to perpetuate her name. We are told that "Jacob's anger was kindled against Rachel." His reply shows that, mild as he was, his character was not wanting in force and energy. "Am I in God's stead?" meaning thereby, Can I give you children if God hath withheld them? "Words brief, but impressively proving Jacob's individual dependence and trust in God, and which ought to have subdued and humbled the discontent and envy of his wife. But though they checked the querulous, they

had no power to change the inward feeling; she determined at all risks and at any sacrifice to obtain children also. She followed the example of Sarah and forced her husband, by increasing the number of his wives, to undergo all the miseries of a divided household."

This man Jacob, who would have been happy with one wife, and who only desired one, was by force of circumstances driven to take four. His first wife being the wrong one, he could only reach the wish of his heart by taking a second. As this one has thus far proved childless, he was urged to take her handmaid and rear children by her, which should be considered as Rachel's own, and she would, in a sense, thus be placed upon an equality with Leah. This having been done, he could not refuse Leah the same favor. These handmaids belonged to the wives and were entirely free from the control of the husband, except as the wives consented to such control. Thus, by the wicked treatment of Laban and the unforeseen circumstances that grew out of it, this man became the possessor of four wives.

Having served his uncle fourteen years for his two daughters, Jacob begins to think about returning home. At this period Rachel's wish is gratified, and she gives birth to a son whom she names Joseph. As soon as the child and mother are able for such a journey, Jacob makes known his wish to return to his own land. Rebekah had promised to send for him when his brother's anger was past, and there was a tradition among the Jews that this was done. Of course this was the land of his sojourn and not his inheritance, and it would not be strange that he should want again to look into the faces of his kindred. Laban was anxious for him to remain longer, and Jacob, seeing that he could not get away without making him an enemy, and desiring to provide something for his family so he should not return empty handed, it was agreed he should remain and a certain part of the increase of the flocks should be given to him.

For a period of six years longer Jacob serves Laban. The flocks of the former increase and there is danger of conflict between the parties. A command comes to Jacob to go back to his kindred, and God promises to go with him. He counseled his wives and they were willing to go. They felt that, in his treatment of them, their father had dealt with them as slaves rather than

children. With his family of twelve children, and with the flocks and herds which had come to him these six years, he starts back to his own land. Laban may attempt to detain him; so while he is engaged shearing sheep three days' journey away, Jacob starts. He may have supposed that, having six days the start, Laban will not interfere with him. This is the same kindly, prudent, affectionate man of whom we have seen before that he would rather avoid difficulty by skill than to meet active opposition. As soon as Laban hears of it, he starts after him, but is admonished in a dream not to interfere with Jacob or seek to compel him to go back. Laban says nothing about property, but complains that he had no chance to kiss his daughters. Had he known of the departure, he would have sent him off with "mirth and songs." Worst of all, Jacob had stolen *his gods!* Laban is granted leave to search for them, and he may put to death any one in whose possession they may be found.

Little did Jacob know that his beloved had done the deed. She had stolen them before they started. We do not know for what purpose. but most likely for superstitious uses. "It is clear that Laban knew and ackowledged the Lord, but with the worship of him he had mixed certain strange gods, or at least certain superstitious images such as elsewhere occur in Scripture under the name of *teraphim,* and which appear to have borne the human figure and to have been used chiefly for purposes of divination." He did not find them in any tent, and finally came to Rachel. She had been brought up in the school of deception and was a match for this father whose devious ways she, no doubt, had learned to know. She had these images concealed under the "camel's" furniture on which she sat in the tent. Professing to be too ill to rise in his presence, he excused her and did not examine her seat. When he did not find anything, Jacob, who no doubt had been an interested spectator, could hold in no longer, and spoke out in no uncertain words showing how faithfully he had served Laban and how ungenerously he had been treated. We have more respect for this man when we see his indisposition to be trampled upon by the one who had been using him from the very time he first entered his tent, for his own personal aggrandizement. Laban could make no reply, but gives up the case and proposes that they make a covenant and erect a stone which shall be a witness, that

Jacob shall not take any other wives, and that they shall not pass this boundary to do any harm to each other.

"Thus far, matters have gone prosperously, in the main, to Jacob; but there is still trouble ahead. The news of Jacob's reappearance so near the land, as no longer a dependent but coming as a man of ample means and considerable retinue, may have awakened in Esau the slumbering spirit of revenge and induced him to have the trouble between them settled. The messengers sent out by Jacob to bear kindly greetings to Esau, returned saying he was coming with four hundred men. Whether they were coming with good or evil intent, Jacob was afraid, and began to make preparations to meet them as best he could. He divides his people and his flocks into two companies, and if one should be attacked the other may still escape. Rachel and Joseph were placed in the rear of all the others, because they were the dearest to him; and having done all this, he retired to pray. Other prayers had been offered before this one, but this is the first recorded prayer, and is short, pointed, and suited to the occasion: "O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, the Lord which saidst unto me, Return unto thy country, and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee: I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast showed unto thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan; and now I am become two bands. Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau: for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, and the mother with the children."

Through the intervention of that God who had led him thus far, the storm passes over and the two brothers again become friends. He resided for a little time at Succoth, so named for the booths provided for his cattle. Soon after this, he crossed the Jordan and pitched his tent near Shechem, which afterwards became the center of the Samaritans. Here he bought a piece of ground from a family of Shechem, and obtained a footing among the people as a man of substance. His sons having made their name odious in the neighborhood, he receives a divine command to go to Bethel where he is to "make an altar unto God." The vow which had been made here years before, had never yet been fulfilled. His family were somewhat troubled with idolatry before they left Padan-aram, and the indications are that this had grown

upon them in connection with the heathen people about Shechem. Before they would be in good condition to build this altar, they are required to give up all the gods that are among them of every design, earrings and other superstitious symbols and charms, and they were buried under the great oak at Shechem. When this was all done, Jacob performed his vow by building an altar.

There was a remarkable death took place here. Deborah, the old nurse of Rebekah, having followed her mistress while living, concluded to spend her last days with Jacob, her favorite son. She had been given to Rebekah when she had left her home to become the wife of Isaac. When she was transferred to Jacob's household, we do not know. One conjecture is that she was sent to Padan-aram to solicit Jacob to return, which is very doubtful. It is probable that Rebekah was dead and that Deborah was allowed to return home or to find a place with Jacob as she chose. That she was held in high repute is shown from the fact that the tree under which she was buried at Bethel, was called "the oak of weeping" on account of the great mourning which was made for her. God again appears to him here and renews the covenant which he had personally made him.

His sojourn here no doubt was one of the brightest spots in his history. "The memory of former merciful revelations was here graciously renewed to him; his family and household were brought in apparent sincerity to the worship of the true God; and in addition to this, the comforts of worldly prosperity were mingled in his cup. But an event soon occurred which taught him how closely connected in this vale of tears are our sorrows and joys. Bethel beheld him at the summit of worldly happiness; Bethlehem, the next town through which he passes, sees him in the depth of affliction, mourning the untimely death of his beloved Rachel." She had asked, "Give me children or I die." God heard her prayer, but at the expense of her life. When her firstborn came she called him Joseph, "for she said, The Lord shall add to me another son." So he did, but she died in giving him birth. She turned her dying eyes toward her child and, having named him Benoni, *son of my sorrow,* she expired. The loving father, however, changed his name to Benjamin, "the son of my right hand." He deeply felt his loss. He loved her when he first met her, and of all his wives she was the only one, probably, for whom he felt

bound by any other tie than that of duty. In his later years, in his last discourse with Joseph, while talking of other matters forty years after her death, he sorrowfully remarks, "As for me, when I came from Padan, Rachel died by me in the land of Canaan in the way, when yet there was but a little way to come unto Ephrath: and I buried her there in the way of Ephrath."

"We all have our trials; this was his trial, and it is the hardest to bear. What is the wrath of man, what is the loss of substance, of comfort, of health, compared with such trials, such loss as this? The deceitfulness of Laban was hard; but he had a spirit that rose above it, that trod it down, that turned it to good. The fierce threats of Esau were terrible; but his heart was in God's hand; he might relent, he did relent; but the grave knows no relenting, the dead come no more back. All other loss is remediable; but such as this, never, while the heart lives to suffer. Besides, as in this case, it is the most loved that is soonest lost. Too strong earthly love, and even love not all earthly, seems to blight its object. It is burnt up suddenly, as by the very warmth of our affection, or it wastes silently away before the glowing heat."

Jacob did not leave the grave unmarked. He "set a pillar upon her grave; that is the pillar of Rachel's grave unto this day." This record was written probably three hundred years after the event. It remained for a long time after that, even to the days of Saul. Jeremiah, by a figure of great force and beauty, represents the buried Rachel weeping for the loss and captivity of her children, as the bands of exiles, led away to Babylon, pass near her tomb. Matthew also applies this to the slaughter of the infants of Bethlehem. While the original pillar may have disappeared, it is not impossible that the structure which travelers see to-day, and which is called Rachel's tomb, may be upon that same spot. The structure there to-day is a small, square building surmounted by a dome and resembling the common tombs of sheiks and saints. A traveler says: "All around this simple tomb lie, thickly strewn, the graves of the Mussulmans. No slender pillars of wood or stone with inscriptions of letters of gold, are here; not a single memorial which this people are otherwise so fond of erecting in their cemeteries. It seems to be sufficient that they are placed beneath the favorite sod; the small and numerous mounds over

which the summer traveler sometimes comes and weeps, mark the places of these graves."

"The story of Jacob and Rachel has always had a peculiar interest; there is that in it which appeals to some of the deepest feelings of the human heart. The beauty of Rachel, the deep love with which she was loved by Jacob from their first meeting by the well of Haran, when he showed to her the simple courtesies of the desert life and kissed her and told her he was Rebekah's son, the long servitude which he patiently served for her, in which the seven years 'seemed to him but a few days for the love he had for her,' their marriage at last after the cruel disappointment through the fraud which substituted the elder sister in the place of the younger, and the death of Rachel at the very time when, in giving birth to another son, her own long-delayed hopes were accomplished and she had become still more endeared to her husband, his deep grief and ever-living regrets for her loss—these things make up a touching tale of personal and domestic history which has kept alive the memory of Rachel—the beautiful, the beloved, the untimely-taken-away—and has preserved to this day a reverence for her tomb."

Miriam---the First Prophetess

"Sound the loud timbrel o'er Egypt's dark sea!
Jehovah has triumphed—his people are free.
Sing, for the pride of the tyrant is broken;
His chariots, his horsemen, all splendid and brave—
How vain was their boast, for the Lord hath but spoken,
And chariots and horsemen are sunk in the wave.
Sound the loud timbrel o'er Egypt's dark sea;
Jehovah has triumphed—his people are free.

"Praise to the conqueror, praise to the Lord!
His word was our arrow, his breath was our sword.
Who shall return to tell Egypt the story
Of those she sent forth in the hour of her pride?
For the Lord hath look'd out from his pillar of glory
And all her brave thousands are dash'd in the tide.
Sound the loud timbrel o'er Egypt's dark sea;
Jehovah has triumphed—his people are free."

—*Thomas Moore.*

Miriam—the First Prophetess

ASSOCIATED with the birth and early history of Moses, the Hebrew lawgiver, are pictures of two female characters, his mother and his sister. The name of the mother, "Jochebed"—"the glory of Jehovah"—gives a strong indication of the high religious faith that must have prevailed in her family. Along with her comes the mention of Miriam, the sister, who must have been about eight or ten years of age when Moses was born. Tradition says that the gift of prophecy came upon her early in childhood. In confirmation of this, it is said Jochebed was one of the midwives to whom Pharaoh gave command to destroy the children of Israel. When the child Miriam, whom tradition says was only four years old, heard this she exclaimed, "My parents shall have another son who shall deliver Israel out of the hands of the Egyptians." When in the course of time the mother found herself with child, she was alarmed lest it might be a boy and be slain; but in a dream, the father was informed that God would protect the child. He was born without pain and the whole house was filled with sunshine. He was a very beautiful child and the parents called him "Tobias," "God is good," to indicate their thankfulness. And Amram kissed Miriam and said, "Now know I that thy prophecy is come true."

In the second chapter of the Book of Exodus, we have a plain, simple statement of a most remarkable event in the history of this humble family. The hours of anguish and the desolation of heart which came to them must be read between the lines. "And there went a man of the house of Levi, and took to wife a daughter of Levi. And the woman conceived, and bare a son: and when she saw him that he was a goodly child, she hid him three months. And when she could not longer hide him, she took for him an ark of papyrus and daubed it with bitumen and pitch, and she put the child therein; and laid it in the flags by the river's brink. And his sister stood afar off, to know what would be done to him. And the daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe at the river; and

her maidens walked along by the river side, and she saw the ark among the flags and sent her handmaid to fetch it. And she opened it and saw the child; and behold, the babe wept. And she had compassion on him, and said, This is one of the Hebrews' children. Then said his sister to Pharaoh's daughter, Shall I go for a nurse of the Hebrew women, that she may nurse the child for thee? And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, Go. And the maid went and called the child's mother. And Pharaoh's daughter said unto her, Take the child away, and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages. And the woman took the child, and nursed it. And the child grew, and she brought him unto Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son. And she called his name Moses: and she said, Because I drew him out of the water."

What does all this trouble mean? There was a time when the Hebrews were in high favor with the Egyptians. It is supposed that the Pharaoh who reigned then was one of the Hyksos or shepherd kings, who had driven out the old kings and had assumed the government of the country, residing chiefly in the northeastern part of it. While Joseph lived, all seemed to go well; but he died, and in the course of time these usurpers were driven out and the rightful dynasty resumed their sway. As a natural result, those who had sustained intimate relations to the usurpers, would be treated with coldness by the new monarch. These people had increased so rapidly that at this time they must have numbered three-fourths of a million. If anything should happen whereby the Hyksos should again attempt to get possession of the land, they would find in these Hebrews valuable allies. Such a number of foreigners, keeping up their own tribe distinctions, possibly having a kind of government of their own, with their own traditional religion to influence them, might prove an element of very great weakness to him. Most of them, it is true, were shepherds, but some had become experts in working in metals and others had become proficient in writing.

The king becomes somewhat alarmed and says to his countrymen, "The children of Israel are more mighty than we." He dare not attack them openly, so he seeks to accomplish his purpose by sly means. In order to destroy them, he made them slaves to the state and exacted from them severe service. They made brick and with them built cities for him. Overseers were appointed

over them "who made the children of Israel to serve with rigor, and they made their lives bitter with hard bondage, in mortar and in brick and in all manner of service in the field." A picture has been discovered on the walls of a tomb at Thebes which, while it is not certain that it refers to the Hebrews, will yet give us some idea of what this service meant: "In this picture some of the laborers are employed in transporting the clay in vessels; some are working it up with the straw; others are taking the bricks out of the molds and setting them in rows to dry; while others, by means of a yoke upon themselves from which ropes are suspended at each end, are seen carrying away the bricks already dried; while the taskmasters are beside them, some standing, others sitting with their uplifted sticks in their hands."

A learned Egyptologist has translated some papyri which speak of a foreign race as employed on public works. In one of them the writer, making a return to the superior officer, says, "I have obeyed the command which my master gave me to provide sustenance for the soldiers, and also for the Asperiu (by some supposed to be Hebrews) who carry stone for the great Bekhen of King Rameses. I have given them rations every month according to the excellent instructions of my master."

In Exodus 5 : 12, we read, "So the people were scattered abroad throughout all the land of Egypt." This does not convey the idea that they were making bricks in Goshen only. There is indeed reason to suppose that the usage in the working of the Israelites, was to send them out in gangs or classes under overseers for a considerable time, making these gangs necessarily relieve each other; and thus there can be no objection to the opinion that some of these gangs may have been sent even so far as Thebes for the sake of their work, where there was the most demand for it. We may be certain that no considerations of humanity were likely to prevent this among such a people as the Egyptians. Indeed, it was evidently for the interest of the Egyptian oppressors, who alleged the numbers of the Israelites as the ground of their apprehension, to scatter them in small bodies over all Egypt as might be practical.

The drafting of these men and working them under the lash, in order to reduce their numbers, seems a dreadful process, but it did not work; for the more they were oppressed, the more the Israelites grew. They owed allegiance to another King "who

doeth according to his will in the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of earth," and while for a time his face seemed to be turned away from them, he had not forgotten them.

The king sought to have those who assisted at the birth of the children of the Hebrews to murder all the males as they were born; but in this he was not successful, for they were most likely Hebrew women "who feared God and did not as the king of Egypt commanded them, but saved the men children alive." Then came the command to all the people that any boy born to the Hebrews should be cast into the River Nile. Thus the people became agents of his in the consummation of this dreadful crime. The fearful cruelty implied in this command does not make it any the less probable. In the time of Abraham, the wives and children of foreigners were the property of the king. The Spartans murdered their helots when their increased numbers excited any alarm; on one occasion they slew two thousand of them when they had offered themselves as volunteers at the invitation of the state.

How long this edict lasted, we do not know, but it could not have been very long in force. Aaron was three years old at the time of Moses' birth, and it did not exist when he was born. It is not probable that it existed long after the birth of Moses, as it would have materially reduced the number of the Israelites. It was in force at the time Moses was born, and the very means used by the king to protect his own people and destroy the Hebrews was, in the providence of God, used to bring a child into his own home, bring him up at his own court, train him in the manners, customs, and polity of the nation, and prepare him the better to lead out his own nation. By his very cruelty, he opened up the way for the man who was to be the great emancipator. Thus is the wrath of man made to praise him, and the remainder thereof he restrains.

Let us look into one of these Hebrew households. Here reside a father and mother who have faith in God. A newborn babe comes into the family. Usually the advent of such a stranger would be hailed with joy, but now there is trouble and anxiety depicted in their countenances. The command has gone forth to throw the child into the Nile, where he shall be drowned or eaten by the crocodiles, and the parents must determine whether they will obey or disobey this royal edict. There was an additional reason for

his preservation, for he was a child of surpassing beauty. "It is beautiful to God," as the expression stands in Stephen's speech, as if it were more than an earthly—yea, a heavenly beauty— that was meant. In the Epistle to the Hebrews we read, "By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment." Are we to think, with Josephus, that in answer to prayer Amram had been informed some months previously, by special revelation, that this child of his was destined to deliver the oppressed people? Such may have been the case, but we have no mention of it. Shall we not rather conclude that they were willing to trust their child in God's hands, obey him rather than the king and take the consequences? They were devoted, pious people who sought to honor God. What shall happen to this child they do not know any more than parents to-day know what shall happen to their children; but, come what may, it was their business to care for the child as best they could, and this they sought to do. To conceal the child for thirteen weeks was no easy task. The father and mother could keep their own counsel, but how prevent Aaron from betraying the secret, or Miriam from informing her friends of the new arrival? There must be absolute silence and constant watchfulness concerning the matter. Those who sympathized with the purpose of the king, would be anxious to know the condition of this household, and quickly report it. If the child should cry, how should it be hushed before the secret should be betrayed to some listening ear? If a rap is heard at the door, or if a visitor calls, how bear the painful suspense, how conceal her anxiety? To her friends and acquaintances she must do as we often do, assume a cheerful, pleasant countenance and make a fair show to the world; but what a burden of care and anxiety must she carry concealed within! Another plan presents itself, and she turns to it. "She took for him an ark of bulrushes."

The papyrus reed, from which we get our word "paper," was at that time very abundant along the shores of the Nile. "It has an angular stem from three to six feet in height, though occasionally it grows to the height of fourteen feet; it has no leaves; the flowers are in very small spikelets, which grow in thread-like, flowery branchlets which form a bushy crown to each stem." From some part of this reed she made her box, daubing it with

mud from which the bricks were made to make the parts adhere and to make them smooth, and then covered it with pitch to make it water-tight. With many tears and prayers and with a tender caress, she places her child in this ark, puts the ark, not in the waters, but among the reeds on the bank, and committed it to Him who holds the king's heart in his hands.

When Abraham journeyed on his way to Mount Moriah, he purposed to sacrifice his son, but he could only reconcile God's promises to him, and the command to do this deed, with the conviction that God was able to raise him from the dead. What was in this good woman's heart to cheer her faith, we do not know. Whether she had any conception that such a thing would occur to her as did finally come to pass, we are not told. She prayed for divine protection and then stationed this little Miriam "afar off to see what would be done to him." Possibly this was the spot where the queen and her maidens were accustomed to assemble, and it was hoped their motherly instincts might be touched. If too far away, she might not be able to see what happened, and if too near, she may seem to be specially interested in the child. What a responsibility rests in the hands of the little Jewish maiden! How long she waits and watches, we do not know. During the long hours of the night, no doubt, she keeps her sacred, lonely vigil. What momentous possibilities hang on the events of that night! The waters may float that child away; animals may destroy him and the household shall be bereaved. All is quiet about her save the waters of the river, as they journey on in their course; the birds have gone to rest unconscious of the events that are transpiring about them; the air is damp, the night chilly, but like the faithful sentinel who guards a sleeping army after a long, tedious march, this little one keeps her watch. As she thinks, for think she must, how her heart goes out to that little brother and the dear ones at home! How gladly she would go to him and care for him, but that would betray her secret and endanger him. As she stands there hour after hour, an important link of the chain which God is making, how very slowly the night wears away! At times her heart beats with anxiety, and then again almost ceases to beat. After a long, weary night, she breathes more freely, for the morning is beginning to dawn; after a time the rays of light push themselves above the horizon, the birds begin to sing, the sunbeams

come forth in their beauty, and her dread and loneliness have, for the most part, been driven away.

As she looks and sees in the distance some Egyptians, for a moment she trembles with anxiety. These parties walk close to the river bank toward the spot where the babe has been hidden. They stop and find the ark, they open it, and a dim smile lights up the countenance. What shall this sister do? She cannot return to her mother, for in her absence the child may be taken away. Possibly she recognizes this to be the king's daughter with her attendants. With the coolness and sagacity which belongs to the later Jews, and in the most unaffected way as though having no special interest in the boy's welfare, she says to this royal lady whose maids had found the ark, "Shall I go and call to thee a nurse of the Hebrew women, that she may nurse the child for thee?" Strange to say, the royal daughter accepts, shall we not say the divinely inspired suggestion of the Hebrew maiden, and says, "Go!"

With what wild delight and with what dancing joy did that little girl who had kept that long night vigil, run to her mother and tell the story of the king's daughter and her attendants and the discovery of the child. With bounding heart she leads the mother to the royal maiden, and how the mother's heart must have leaped for joy as the king's daughter unconsciously gave back her own child with the instruction, "Take the child away and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages." Did ever a woman enter upon any service with more delightful heart? What wages did she want more than to realize that her own dear child was put back in her own arms by royal authority, and that his life should now be spared?

"Who may attempt to describe the joy of Amram's household on that memorable night when to the happiness of having the child there was added the delight of feeling that their treasure was secure under the protection of the king's daughter? Who may tell of the thanksgiving that went up to God because he had crowned their confidence in him with such abundant blessing? And how would Miriam rejoice that now her tongue was let loose and she could tell to all around her of her little brother without endangering his life! How she would recount again and again the adventures of the day and finish up in her ecstasy with a song,

which was the prelude and prophecy of that glowing anthem chanted by her and her attendant maidens with timbrels and with dances on the Red Sea shore!"

What but an overruling and directing Providence could have so successfully brought about these wonderful results? "When you come to a great railway junction at which trains arrive from north and south and west in time to be united to another that is just starting for the east, and you see the connection made, nobody talks of a happy coincidence. There was a presiding mind guiding the time of the arrival of the train in each case, so that the junction was reached by all at the required moment." To human ken there is no miracle in this early history of Moses. The events that happen to him come in their natural order and might have happened to any other; and yet how the hiding of the child in a particular spot, the coming of the princess, the happy suggestion of the sister, all converge to bring about the desired result! If a sparrow shall not fall to the ground without the Father's notice, is he not in the life of each one of us to-day as certainly as in the past, guiding and overruling and controlling all events, however minute they may seem, for our good and his glory?

We hear nothing more of this devoted sister until eighty, perhaps eighty-five, years have passed, when we find her prominent in celebrating the overthrow of the Egyptians at the Red Sea. How these intervening years were spent, we do not know. While the boy Moses remained at his own home under the direction of his mother, the sister no doubt would be a very important factor in his life, would be his constant companion, his nurse, his protector, his friend. When taken to the court of the king to receive the instructions which the adopted son should have, there was probably less frequent communion between the members of this family, and yet there is no doubt but frequent means of communication were found. The fact that he was surprised when his own people did not recognize him as their deliverer, reveals to us that his own mind had made itself familiar with this purpose, and no doubt the sister knew of the aim he was placing before him and hoped to realize. We are told he was "educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians," and Stephen reports him as "mighty in words and deeds." The sacred history is very brief here concerning him, for the pen of the historian makes rapid strides; but tradition fills

up this gap by informing us that he was educated at Heliopolis and grew up there as a priest under an Egyptian name. He was taught the whole range of Greek, Chaldean, and Assyrian literature. From the Egyptians he learned mathematics, to train his mind for the reception of truth. He invented boats and engines for building, instruments of war and of hydraulics, divisions of land, etc. He taught Orpheus, and was called by the Egyptians Hermes; he taught grammar to the Jews whence it spread to Phœnicia and Greece. He was sent on an expedition against the Ethiopians. He got rid of the serpents of the country to be traversed, by turning basketfuls of ibises upon them.

It is not at all unlikely that, as the relations of Moses, the family might have had special favors granted to them by those who had adopted him. If not, then they were subject to the same privations and to the same burdens as were the others. Miriam's relationship to Moses would give her prominence with her own people, while he was at the Egyptian court, and much more when he appeared as Jehovah's ambassador. Her association with Moses, her knowledge of men and things that she had acquired, added to her own intrinsic ability, made her a leader of prominence with her own people and among her own sex. During the time when the dreadful plagues were in the land manifesting the anger of an insulted God, she was there to comfort and encourage her own people and to aid her brothers in the work they were called to do.

Events thicken. Moses makes known his purpose and is driven into Midïan. After forty years of training and discipline and communion with God in nature's own temples, he comes back again with the hand of God upon him. Now comes the terrific combat which shall determine who is the true God, and after a bloody struggle which caused sorrow and wailing throughout the land, Moses comes off victorious. He is permitted to lead God's chosen host out of the land of bondage. The doors of their cruel servitude have been thrown wide open, their shackles broken off, and they go forth free men.

Jehovah, after a long delay, has heard their complaints and answered with vengeance upon their oppressors. The divine hand leads them around the passes of the mountains until the midnight

hour finds them on the shores of the Red Sea. They supposed they were now safe, but a cry of terror comes up indicating that the chariots of Pharaoh are on the track. Consternation seizes upon the people. If captured and taken back, a fate more cruel than any thing they have yet suffered awaits them. Terrified and disheartened, they turn against Moses, their deliverer, and cry out, "Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt? Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness."

The Lord, who never deserts his children, stood by Moses and commanded him to go forward. He stretches his rod, the symbol of divine power, over the swollen waters; the waters roll up on either side, and like walls of adamant they stay there until all of God's children have safely passed through. It was the dark hour of midnight, but the pillar of fire was there to reveal to them the right path. There was haste but no excitement, no confusion. They *walked* upon dry land. With hope mingled with fear they marched through this perilous deep. Mothers press their children closer in their arms as they gaze upon the walls on either side of them, held there by the hand of the Omnipotent. Not one of their number was left behind or fell into the hands of their foes. They reach the farther bank in safety. As they looked behind them they saw the Egyptian hosts, with exultant hearts, with waving banners and pealing music, following on their track. Their glory was but for a moment, for the hand that had held these restless waters, loosened its hold and the waves rolled back with redoubled fury and submerged them all, so "there remained not so much as one of them." For years had the Egyptian oppressors lorded it over these poor Hebrews. "They had bruised them with rods and beaten them with the scourge; they had strangled their children at the birth and had given their little ones to the maw of the crocodile; they had governed them with hard bondage and exacted from them 'day labor, light denied'; and for more than a century it seemed as if Jehovah heeded not; but he had put the tears of the slaves into his bottle, and when the hour of doom

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rang out, for each of those diamond drops there was a victim. The retribution had been long in coming, but when it did come it was thorough."

Like one who has been delivered from some terrible catastrophe, some railway accident, some dreadful conflagration, stood these people on the shore of that memorable sea, on that eventful morning. They had been in the very jaws of death, and yet had been mercifully preserved. At the very moment when about to step over into the unknown future, a tender, strong hand had reached out and rescued them. Awe-stricken and subdued in the presence of this startling deliverance, "they feared Jehovah and believed Jehovah and his servant Moses." As the morning dawned, they saw the bodies of their slain enemies, who had sunk "as lead in the mighty waters," washed up by the returning waves of the eventful sea. As they had time to recover from the awe-stricken feeling and to consider the wonderful deliverance which had come to them, they burst forth into that exultant song of Moses which has rung through the ages "and which shall hold its place as the foremost song of praise until the day when it shall be surpassed by the freer and more fervent chorus of the song of the Lamb." When the revelator from the Isle of Patmos looked into the heavenly land and saw the victorious throng which stood upon the glassy sea "having the harps of God" in their hands, they sang "the song of Moses, the servant of God." Long before the grand old ballads of Homer were sung through the streets of the Grecian cities, or the foundations of the seven-hilled metropolis of the ancient world were laid by the banks of the Tiber, this matchless ode was chanted by the leaders of the emancipated Hebrews on the Red Sea shore.

Moses and his brethren did not have all the rejoicing to themselves. The women did not keep silent in the church. "Miriam, the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances." And at the proper pauses in the grand song, the women came in with the chorus, accompanying the timbrel and the dance with the triumphant shout of deliverance:

> "Sing ye to the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously;
> The horse and the rider hath he thrown into the sea."

The union of Moses and Miriam as representative leaders in this public act of thanksgiving, at the beginning of the nation's history, is the commencement of that due honor which, all the way down, is shown to women in spiritual things, an indication at the beginning of the Mosaic era of that spiritual equality of both sexes which is to prevail wherever Christianity holds sway. Joel relates the same teaching in his prophecy of the coming future. "On your sons and your daughters I will pour out my spirit and they shall prophesy." And Peter, on the day of Pentecost, when the Christian dispensation is being ushered in, proclaims the wonderful outpouring of the spirit as the fulfillment of the time foretold, "On my handmaids in this day I will pour forth my spirit and they shall prophesy."

There are reasons for believing that not only on this occasion but afterwards Moses and Miriam were united in the government and instruction of the people during the time when the laws and ritual were in process of crystallization. The sister who had been a mother to him, might have been consulted on all matters of administration through brotherly fondness alone, but other things indicate that it was done by divine arrangement, and that Miriam was as directly called of God to her place as was Moses. In the reign of Hezekiah, the prophet Micah represents the divine Being as thus addressing his people: "I brought thee up out of the land of Egypt, I sent before thee *Moses and Aaron and Miriam* (Micah 6:4). The same power that commissioned Moses and Aaron as clearly approved her. In Exodus the inspired writer calls her "Miriam, the prophetess." At this period in the world's history, the office meant "one inspired of God or the medium of God's communications and revelations to mankind; it was the name applied to all who declared God's will, who foretold the future, and even to great religious teachers. It occurs constantly in the Pentateuch in the general sense of one in communion with God and made the medium of God's communications to man."

After the conclusion of the thanksgiving service at the Red Sea, Moses starts with his people for Mt. Sinai. He has a large concourse of people made up of women and children, and with a mixed multitude of camp followers who were more or less associated with them in Egypt. The road was not new to him, for he had possibly been over a part of it when in Midian. These will

sometime, no doubt, develop into a well-ordered nation, but, apparently, they are a weak, fretful, complaining crowd. Whatever goes wrong with them, the burden always falls upon the leader. No doubt he has had the counsel and coöperation of Miriam and Aaron, but there comes a time when these fail him. He can with some difficulty bear the complaints and murmurings of the people, but when his own family speaks against him and defies his authority, his cup of anguish is full. It is the more painful because these two had been associated with him hitherto and had shared his confidence and his honor. The burdens he was now carrying were not of his own choosing. He was not an ambitious man who sought preferment. When he was first commissioned to do this work, he urged his unfitness, and Aaron was appointed to help and to share the honor which otherwise would have been given to Moses alone. He was suffering and toiling, not for Moses, but for Jehovah. Perhaps no public man was more unselfish in the administration of affairs than was this man. So heavy had the burdens become that Jethro advised him to appoint judges to aid him in the management of affairs. If those who are members of his own family, and in whom he has especially confided, shall turn against him, how can he find fault with others who know but little of his motives or labors?

Miriam seems to lead in this rebellion against Moses, as she was the most severely punished. "They spake against Moses." The words of Miriam to Aaron, "Hath the Lord spoken only by Moses, hath he not also spoken by us?" indicate that these persons hitherto had possessed a divine call to their work. At this juncture it shows a feeling of envy, a spirit of detraction on the part of this sister. In her opinion, they belonged to the same family and were of as good blood as he; they were older than he was; Jehovah had made them leaders among the people and had given them positions of prominence; by what authority should Moses conclude that he was entitled to more consideration at the hands of the public than they? It was the outcropping of that spirit which has cursed the church in all ages, the desire to exalt ourselves by debasing others. Had Moses been a self-seeking, ambitious man, who sought his own promotion at any cost, we could see some sort of excuse for such conduct; but as it is, we see none.

The feeling seems to have been in her own mind for some time, but the opportunity for a manifestation of it presents itself on the occasion of the entrance of Moses' wife into camp. How much of this was a real grievance and how much pretended, we cannot at this distance tell. The record simply tells they spake against him "because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married." Who this woman was, is still an unsolved problem. Some suppose she was a second wife whom Moses married after the death of Zipporah herself, the daughter of Jethro.

She had been brought to Sinai only a few months before. In all human probability Miriam had never seen her until that time. She was a foreigner, and this might not prepossess Miriam in her favor. More than all other reasons, it might seem to her that the place of honor among the women, which had hitherto been granted to her as the sister of Moses, would now, in all human probability, be granted to Moses' wife. It is hard to give up to another a post of honor which one has filled to satisfaction, and especially if we think we are more competent to fill the position than the one who claims it; and if we wish to retain the place, we are very apt so to think. Jethro, his father-in-law, had already advised the appointment of seventy judges, and his advice had been taken. Hobab has been persuaded to go with them the remainder of the journey and be "eyes to them." It looks to Miriam as though the new family were to have control, and his own people were to fall into the back-ground.

It was easy for Miriam, in her frame of mind, to find reasons, and she found them, such at least as were satisfactory to her. The brother who had been placed in high official position and who should have discouraged such unsanctified ambition and stood by Moses, is weak, as usual, and yields to her stronger will. What must the great-hearted Moses, who was conscious of his innocence of any attempt to sway authority over them or the people but who had sought to push aside this load of responsibility, think of such conduct? How his heart must have sunk within him to think what the beloved Miriam, who had so faithfully aided him in his tender years, should now, without a shadow of a reason, rise up against him and bid defiance to the law which he was sent to enforce! We should have excused him if a righteous indignation had found vent at this time. But he could afford to be

silent when the One who appointed him understood him. The three were called to the tabernacle, and, having separated Aaron and Miriam from Moses, God speaks to them. "Hear thou my words; if there be a prophet among you, I the Lord will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream. My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all mine house. With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the Lord shall he behold: wherefore then were ye not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?"

The Lord had indeed spoken by Miriam and Aaron, but not as he had spoken by Moses. He was both messenger and ruler over all God's house. He was in authority, not by his own arrangement, but by divine appointment. The act of these two was a great wrong against Moses, but was also a sin against God, because it sought to deprive Moses of that which God had put into his hands. Such conduct on the part of those in high official position must not go unpunished. When the cloud disappeared, the indications of Jehovah's displeasure were seen in the hideous leprosy which overspread the entire person of Miriam; on the handsome features of that magnificent woman came that filthy, loathsome disease which shuts its victims out of good society. It was a severe punishment, but the crime had been an aggravated one. It was the business of Aaron, the priest, to examine her and make known her disease. The very person who had aided and abetted her crime, was to pronounce the sentence upon her which should send her out of the camp and away from the society of those over whom she had exercised control. Aaron intercedes for her with Moses and Moses with God. The penalty was in part remitted, but something is due to him whose honor has thus been slighted. "If her earthly father had shown himself to be displeased with her conduct by doing something to her which could be speedily removed, she would then have felt so ashamed as to have hid herself from public view for a season; so now that the mark of her Heavenly Father's indignation is upon her for her great offense, let her for very shame remain apart for seven days, and after that let her be received again." For a week the people wait for the woman who has held such an exalted position among them but who, in an evil hour, made a great mistake. The position of Moses will no longer

be questioned, for it has received the divine endorsement in language that cannot be mistaken.

We hear no more of this gifted woman until her work is done and she is called up higher. A period of forty years passes, concerning which time we hear little of her or the people she represents. They have grievously rebelled against God and mistreated his servant, Moses, and for this they shall not be allowed to enter the earthly Canaan. It is a very sad period in their history, and the pen of inspiration is silent concerning it. Some have supposed that they spent their time in marching up and down these wadys trying to find a way out of their present habitation, but their eyes were blinded and the exits were all hedged up. Others suppose that, with Kadesh Barnea as a kind of center, they wandered here and there as the needs of their flocks would demand. They all remain here until they die. One by one their numbers lessen; as the days go by, the grave closes over them and they are gone. It must be a distressing period in the career of Moses. Of the host that left Egypt with him, his counselors and helpers nearly all have disappeared. He is growing old and will likely be kept out of the land of promise. During this transition period, some method of working, some form of government, no doubt was kept up and the authority of Moses and Miriam and Aaron still recognized. No doubt she faithfully aided him in the management of the people, guiding and leading her sisters as the interests of all required. There would be no longer any question of rank or authority, the great affliction through which she had passed had disciplined her for the duties that awaited her.

Periods of affliction, severe and hard as they may be, will after a time have an end. The forty years of wandering, sad and painful as they must have been, are about to cease. The people who have been scattered up and down the wadys, carrying for their families and their flocks, now hear the call to assemble. Many of these people who are left have been born here, and no doubt are loath to leave the home of their childhood, unprepossessing though it may be. Moses finds himself face to face with a new generation that has grown up since he left Pharaoh's dominions. Will they have learned lessons of patience from the blunders of their fathers, or will they also prove disobedient children? Moses, no doubt, comes to this duty with a sad heart, remembering the

thousands of his people who have disappeared since he left Egypt, and not knowing the trials that shall come to him with the new generation.

But other misfortunes come to him at Kadesh while preparing for this universal movement—"Miriam died and was buried there." Having had the benefit of her motherly counsel and guidance all his life, and her help during all these years of wanderings, it is with a sad heart that he and Aaron lay her away in the grave. In this hour of bereavement he will forget the unhallowed ambitions manifested in the wilderness, and remember her faithful help from the hour when she watched his little form in the reeds by the Nile until the present hour. Never, perhaps, was a woman more honored by a noble brother, and never, perhaps, did a woman cherish such a brother more faithfully than did she.

We know nothing more of her death, but we are sure she was ready to die. Save the one incident referred to, her record is clear and honorable, and her life is endorsed by the sacred writers. She no doubt could have said as did John Wesley to a lady who asked him how he would spend the intervening time if he certainly knew that he was to die the next night at twelve o'clock; he replied: "How, madam? Why, just as I intend to spend it now. I should preach this evening at Gloucester and again at five to-morrow morning; after that I should ride to Tewkesbury, preach in the afternoon, and meet the societies in the evening. I should then repair to friend Martin's house—he expects to entertain me—converse and pray with the family as usual, retire to my room at ten o'clock, commend myself to my Heavenly Father, lie down to rest, and wake up in glory." Just as surely was this woman found at her post, and for her "to live was Christ, and to die, gain."

Josephus tells us that solemn funeral honors were paid to her, and that the nation tarried in mourning for her for thirty days. There is a tradition among the rabbinical writers that, because of having saved her brother's life at the River Nile, a spring of living water followed her through the wanderings in the wilderness, and from this the people drank; when she died, the spring became dry. It is a touching memento of the high esteem in which she was held by the whole nation. Josephus further states that, according to tradition, she was the wife of Hur; but as the Scriptures are entirely silent, not giving even the remotest hint on

the matter, we shall prefer to think of her as an unmarried woman, aiding her brother in the management of a great people, and with him commissioned of God to make known his will; an example for all time that, in the selection of messengers to do his will, God knows no distinction of sex.

One who reads the laws as given by Moses for the government of the Israelitish people, must be struck with the high honor and tender consideration everywhere paid to women. The more sad and desolate her condition, the more she is hedged about with protective influences. One of the most important peculiarities of the teaching of Moses is his care of family life. He sought the perpetuity of the family. What could more strongly show the delicate care of woman and the high regard paid to the family than the provision, "When a man hath taken a new wife, he shall not go to war, neither shall he be charged with any business, but he shall be free at home one year, and shall cheer up his wife which he has taken." Among the Greeks a wife did not associate with her husband as an equal. Among the Romans the father had the power of life and death over his wife and children. Among the Jews the mother had an equal place with the father, and must be revered and honored as much as the father. "He that revileth his father and his mother" shall be put to death. Women taken in war were to be treated with a delicacy and consideration which we find nowhere else. In all the heathen nations, captive women were the slaves of their captors, to be used by them as they thought best. Says Moses, "If thou seest among thy captives a beautiful woman and hast a desire unto her that thou wouldst have her to wife, then thou shalt bring her to thy house and she shall remain in thy house, and bewail her father and mother a full month; and after that thou shalt go in unto her and be her husband and she shall be thy wife." If, at the end of this period, he does not wish to marry her, he must give her her liberty and allow her to go where she pleases.

His laws do not absolutely prohibit, yet they do discourage, polygamy. Women servants could not be kept for the gratification of a temporary passion. The law gave to every concubine the rights and immunities of a legal wife. A man was not allowed to marry two sisters, for in so doing he would vex the first. Personal favoritism must not be allowed to influence the rights of

children of different wives. In the considerations of adultery, the crime must be punished by the death of both parties, for both were equally guilty. There is a special promise made for the widow and her children. She shall not be afflicted; the forgotten sheaf in the field must be left for her; her raiment must not be taken for a pledge. The daughters must not be given in marriage to the heathen. Concerning the daughters of Zelophehad, it was commanded, "Let them marry to whom they will." Running through all these ordinances we see a high honor put on woman, a strong appreciation of her dangers, her duties, and her relations, which we are sure Moses did not learn from his associations with the Egyptian people. Do we not see through all this legislation the indications of a woman's heart, who could best know where protection was necessary and who guided the judgment and heart of her brother, so that, in the best sense of the term, he has become the lawgiver of the ages? May not the high position given to women among the Jewish people in all history and through them the honor accorded her to-day, be due in good part to the faithful teaching and worthy example of this gifted prophetess of God who on the banks of the Red Sea led her sisters in their triumphant song of deliverance?

Ruth---the Young Widow

"Yet set she not her soul so steadily
Above, that she forgets her ties to work,
But her whole thought would almost seem to be
How to make glad one lowly, human heart;
For with a gentle courage she doth strive
In thought and word and feeling so to live
As to make earth heaven; and her heart
Herein doth show its most exceeding work,
That, bearing in our frailty her just part,
She hath not shrunk from evils of this life,
But hath gone calmly forth into the strife,
And all its sins and sorrows hath withstood
With lofty strength of patient womanhood;
For this I love her great soul more than all,
That, being bound, like us, with earthly thrall,
She walks so bright and heaven-like therein,
Too wise, too meek, too womanly to sin."

—*James Russell Lowell.*

Ruth—the Young Widow

IN all the range of ancient literature, there is nothing comparable to the story of Ruth in the tenderness and simplicity with which it is narrated and in its genuine piety and faithfulness to nature. "The simple and touching interest of the story, the beautiful and engaging scenery which it exhibits, the homelike and honest manners which it describes, the oppressive and heart-felt piety which pervades the whole, render it the most remarkable picture of ancient life and usages extant, and give us a far more complete idea of the real conditions of Hebrew life in the early ages of their settlement in Canaan than we could otherwise possess. The young and the old read it with equally enrapt interest."

The story occurred during the time of the Judges. God intended, as we understand it, that the government of his ancient people should be theocratic; that is, they should be ruled by him through the high priest. After the death of Joshua, the people, influenced in part by their evil surroundings, strayed away from God, and the heathen nations came upon them to chastise them. From time to time, as they repented, God raised up special men and women in certain parts of the nation—fifteen in all—whose names are given us, to rescue the people and lead them to a more faithful obedience to him. This sort of authority continued over four hundred years, from the time of Joshua to the reign of Saul. This scene is supposed to have occurred over twelve hundred years before the coming of Christ. During this time, as there was no imperative authority in the land, each man did as he pleased and helped himself in such a way as he thought best.

There was a famine in the land. No rain came, and the crops did not prosper. In times like this, the people in northern Palestine usually resorted to Egypt for supplies, as the history of Joseph very plainly shows. The increase of prices resulting from scarcity of crops at home would press heavily upon the poorer class of people. If for any reason they were cut off from the sup-

plies from Egypt, nothing was left for them but to look to eastern sources for their necessary food. This famine must have been somewhat general, for it extended to the most fertile parts of the country. The name Bethlehem, "house of bread," would indicate a fertile district. The region was well watered in comparison with other parts of the country. Even to this day, in spite of its poor cultivation, it is quite fruitful in olives, pomegranates, almonds, figs, and grapes.

Owing to the famine now prevailing, a man named Elimelech, "my God is king," resolved to leave this town, and, with his wife and two sons, he journeyed across the Jordan and settled in the plains of Moab, whither the famine did not extend. "Here we find the uncircumcised Moabites, bondslaves and vassals, had plenty of store, while Israel, God's children (but his prodigal children who, by their sins, had displeased their Heavenly Father), were pinched with penury." The Jewish writers blame this man for leaving his own land in such a time of distress. He left his friends and relatives in their misfortune and went forth to live in an enemy's land. He forsook his own home and became a stranger in Moab. If he did right, all of Bethlehem might have done the same thing. The famine, no doubt, was a chastening discipline to the people, but this man, they say, seeks to evade it by journeying to a foreign land. By cutting himself off from his own people, he will seek to change the orderings of divine providence. Quaint old Thomas Fuller, in 1654, gave the following advice to those who were contemplating coming to America: "Now, if any do demand my opinion concerning our brethren which of late left this kingdom to advance a plantation in New England, surely I think as St. Paul said concerning virgins: he had 'received no commandment from the Lord'; so I cannot find any just warrant to encouragement to undertake this removal, but I think rather that counsel best, that King Joash prescribed to Amaziah, 'Tarry at home.' Yet as for those that are already gone, far be it from us to conceive them to be such to whom we may not say, 'God speed,' as it is in II. John, verse 10, but let us pity them and pray for them; for sure they have no need of our mocks, which, I am afraid, have too much of their own misery. I conclude, therefore, of the two Englands, what our Savior saith of

the two wines, Luke 5:39: 'No man, having tasted of the old, presently desireth the new, for he seeth the old is better.'"

This man belonged to the tribe of Judah, and his family was of some importance in the tribe and well known about Bethlehem. This tribe and that of Simeon are the only tribes of Israel which seem to have driven out the previous Canaanite possessors. All the others, to a greater or lesser extent, appear to have entered into peaceful covenant with the Canaanite, and, in spite of the divine command to the contrary, permitted them to dwell with them even in their cities. In their early history, Judah seems to have been the most faithful tribe, and there is not recorded of them the crimes and idolatries practiced by their brethren. This family is not one of the poorest, as we find they have some landed property. The names of the family are suggestive of previous prosperity. The wife's name was Naomi, "the lovely, gracious one." There is a little uncertainty about the names of the two sons, but it seems more than probable that Mahlon suggested "joy" and Chilion "ornament." They are called Ephrathites of Bethlehem-Judah. Ephratah was the ancient name of Bethlehem and the region around it; hence these people were natives of the city, persons properly belonging to the tribe of Judah, and not mere residents in Bethlehem who had come from some other tribe.

The family reached the plains of Moab and settled there. They found a land of plenty in contrast to the desolation they had left behind them. But death claims all lands for his own. Not long after they arrived—just how long is not recorded—the father died, even in this land of plenty. He could have but died amid the dearth of Israel. It was the first real, sad lesson in the history of this family. Naomi is now a widow, away from the home of her youth, from the sympathy of her own people, from the sepulchers of her fathers, and in a foreign land. In her sad affliction she has two sons left, who would take their father's place and bring peace and quiet to her bereaved heart. In due time, these young men marry Moabitish women, named Orpah and Ruth. These marriages appear to have been in violation of the divine law, which forbade marriages with idolatrous nations in order to keep the chosen people from the corruptions of idolatry. In respect to young people desiring marriage, it was the usual custom for the fathers or mothers to provide wives for them, as Hagar did for

Ishmael. Here it is said "they took them wives," a phrase which usually has a bad sense and means this was done in opposition to the wish and advice of Naomi who probably contemplated, in the very near future, to return to her own land and select them wives from their own kindred. This the Jewish people thought the proper thing to do, but these young men seem to have concluded to establish themselves permanently in this foreign land, which by this time had become quite a home to them. If there was an offense upon the part of these sons, it was not so much in the marriage itself, but in the disrespect which is manifested to their own people and the law of God. These wives, in an outward sense at least, seem to have adopted the religion of their husbands, and the mother-in-law, in the companionship of these women who have now come into her home, will find some fresh comfort. During the lifetime of these sons, we have no further record of the family history. The mother-in-law seems to have been gentle and meek and to have manifested a guileless piety in every relation in life, while the daughters-in-law learned to love her with a deep and fervent affection.

There comes another sad affliction to this mother when both of her sons are stricken down. "How is it the men die first? Sure, this is cruelty from our point of view, that the men should have the best of it, that the men should be rid of the burden whilst they are quite young, and the women be left to weep and wonder and slave and suffer unspeakably, displaying a patience that might reverently be called divine. Why should they not have the best of life and go into heaven first and be there to meet those who need more discipline, meet those whom longer exposure in the bleak air would do good? But it is well.

> 'God keeps a niche
> In heaven to hold our idols; and albeit
> He break them to our faces and denied
> That our close kisses should impair them, white,
> I know we shall behold them raised, complete,
> The dust swept from their beauty—glorified,
> New Memnons singing in the great God, Light.'"

Alas for the uncertainty of human joys and human hopes! Hardly has that little home circle been made complete and the angel of happiness again settled down upon the family, when it

is driven away by the ruthless hand of the destroyer. As these young wives try to cheer up the heart of the loved mother-in-law and make her forget the loneliness of her widowhood, how little they know of the future, and how ignorant of the fact that their hearts, now brimming over with newly found joy, will soon experience an agony of which they have not before known. Now as they look into each other's eyes, they have an appreciation of that mother's sorrow of which they were hitherto unconscious.

The mother-in-law is now old and heartbroken, with two widowed daughters-in-law on her hands. By the adoption of the religion of their husbands they have made something of a break between themselves and their own people. It was natural at this time for the mother's thoughts to turn back to the home of her children. As we reach the end of life, we live over again the scenes of the past. It is said of the foreigner in a strange land, that when he comes to die, the words most frequently upon his tongue are the words of his native language, and the visions that most frequently come to him are the visions of the land of his birth. Whatever may have been the ties that held Naomi to this foreign land, they are now all gone. She hears that "the Lord hath visited his people in giving them bread." It does not follow from her statement that the famine had lasted ten years, for the land could hardly have endured that, but simply that it is now over and plenty smiles once more. The judgments of God have now been turned away and he has remembered his people in mercy. It may have ended long before she heard of it. Letter writing was not much practiced and intelligence would be conveyed mainly by travelers. Messages would be sent to friends, and travelers would be glad to carry them, for it would give them a claim for kindness and hospitality from those for whom these messages were intended. The land of Moab was not far away, but it was on the opposite side of the Dead Sea, and off the line of travel which the inhabitants of southern Palestine would likely take; hence information would reach them very slowly.

Naomi had probably learned of it sooner, but circumstances were such she could not get away. We are not quite sure whether the purpose of these daughters-in-law was to return with Naomi to Judea or not, but we are inclined to think it was. Ere they started away from their childhood's home, do doubt they would

visit the places where their loved ones were sleeping, and with sad hearts take their final farewell of the spot made sacred by their presence. They commenced their journey westward. It is all new to these young widows, but Naomi would remember how she passed over that same route ten years before, rejoicing in the companionship of a husband and two strong boys, and now she had left them sleeping in a foreign land, awaiting the trump which shall call us all to judgment. If the mother understood these two women to be simply escorting her a short distance on her way, as was the custom of friends and relatives in the east, it seemed to her they had gone as far as was proper for them and as she could afford to ask, and it was now time for them to return. If, on the contrary, they had started intending to go the whole journey, the thought no doubt comes to Naomi, Why involve these young women in her childless destiny? They belonged to the people of Moab. Here were their friends and acquaintances and here the home of their youth. She was taking them from their native land to a home of strangers. She had no more sons to offer them, but in their own land they might marry again. Much as she would like to have them, she must not sacrifice their wellbeing, so her generosity rises above her grief. She suddenly stops and says to these women, "Go, return each to her mother's house: the Lord deal kindly with you, as ye have dealt with the dead and with me. The Lord grant you that ye may find a resting place, each of you in the house of her husband." Then she kissed them a kind farewell and they all wept.

What an interesting picture we get here of this family life! There were no children to strengthen the bonds of affection, yet these women were worthy of their husbands. They had found a conception of a Jewish home such as was not common among their own people. They had seen the higher morality which pervaded a Jewish household. They had requited the treatment which they had received with self-sacrificing affection. They had not only heard of the religion of Jehovah, but they had seen it to some extent manifested in the lives of their husbands, and especially in the faithful living of Naomi. In a husband's home is the asylum for a woman. Here she finds affection, safety, and honor. These women are yet young and she must not take them into her uncertain life. The widows of her sons may, yes possibly ought to,

marry again. She will not take them away from such probable happiness, but fervently prays that they may each rest in the home of a new husband. They all wept. It is hard to send back those whom she has adopted as her own daughters, and it is equally as hard for them to forsake one who has been to them a mother. In the grief of the hour, with eyes suffused with tears, they cry out, "No, no! We will return with thee unto thy people."

She would not take any advantage of passionate regret which seemed to be in opposition to their own temporal welfare, and which their better judgment might not approve; so she urges them once more to return. She has held up to their view the prospect of another marriage among their own people which will bring them comfort and peace. She has no other sons she can offer them. There is no hope of renewed married happiness if they go with her. Naomi has no husband. If she were married and brought forth two sons that very night, these widowed women could not shut themselves away from other associations while these sons were growing to manhood. She does not dare to tell them in any plainer language that Israel does not sanction matrimonial connections with Moab. They can hope for nothing in Israel except what she can give, and she has given them her all. Her condition is worse than theirs. It is hard for her to let them go, for she is alone. There is a future for them, but her happiness is buried in a foreign grave and there is no blissful future for her. Once more their tears burst forth as if their hearts were ready to break. Orpah finally yielded to the entreaties of her mother-in-law, and started to go back again to her own people. "Orpah was one of the many, feeling powerfully at the moment, passionately desirous to evince that she felt, but liable to be easily diverted from her purpose. Penetrating no deeper than the surface, she perhaps believed Naomi's words, as neither desiring nor requiring her further company; and therefore repeatedly she kissed her mother-in-law and wept, but at length turned back to her own home. Much as she loved the aged Naomi, earnestly as she wished to serve her, she had not sufficient firmness and steadiness of character to act of herself and sat at naught the persuasions of affection. Gentle and yielding, it was easier for her to grieve than to act. She was woman in her weakness, Ruth was woman in her strength; and both are as beautifully true to woman now as then."

Ruth's own unselfish nature helped her more clearly to interpret her mother-in-law's words. She understood how Naomi could urge them to return for their own sakes, and yet how strenuously she clung to them as her last ties on earth. She realized as only an affectionate heart could, her mother-in-law's forlorn condition. It is a strange providence how the very same things divided these two sisters-in-law, and sent one in one direction and another in a different one.

"So, from the heights of will,
Life's parting stream descends;
And, as a moment turns its slender rill,
Each widening torrent bends,
From the same cradle side,
From the same mother's knee,
One to long darkness and the frozen tide,
One to the peaceful sea."

The fact that Naomi had no more sons, no husband, had only sorrow and penury and solitariness for her lot, were the very things that made the affectionate, loving Ruth cling the closer to her. This very hopefulness of the future sends Orpah back to Moab. "Few among the natural children of men are as kind and good as Orpah; but a love like that of Ruth has scarcely entered the thoughts of poets. Antigone dies for love of her brother; but the life which awaited Ruth was more painful than death. Alcestis sacrifices herself for her husband, and Sigune persistently continues in a solitary cell with the corpse of her lover, whom she had driven into battle, until she dies; but Ruth goes to a foreign land and chooses poverty, not for a husband or a lover, but for the mother of him who, long since, was torn away from her. She refuses to leave for the very reason that she is poor, old, and childless. Naomi, having lost her sons, shall not on that account lose her daughter also. Rather than leave her to suffer alone, Ruth will slave with her or beg for her. Here is love for the dead and the living surpassing that of Alcestis or Sigune. That Ruth does for her mother-in-law what, as the highest filial love, the poet invents for Antigone when he represents her as not leaving her blind father, is in actual life almost unexampled. Nor would it be easy to find an instance of a deeper conflict than that which love had to sustain on this occasion—nationality, laws, and

customs were about to separate mother and daughter-in-law. But as love had united them, so also love has power to solve the conflict, but only such love as Ruth's. Orpah escapes the struggle by returning to Moab; Ruth ends it by going with Noami."

Ruth will abide with Naomi. She has decided what to do, and she presses her case in fitting and tender words which have compelled the admiration of the centuries: "Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God, my God; where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me." Not the most carefully studied oration could breathe more undying, changeless, self-submitting devotion than these few and simple words. Naomi was evidently poor. The riches of the Hebrews did not consist then of such wealth as would provide for their families after their death. Land and its produce constituted their possession, and these, when there were no males to cultivate, could not prevent the female survivors from being poor as well as the bereaved. Naomi's return to her own land would of course, according to the law of God, secure her provision, but in the constant rebellion and disobedience of the people it was precarious and uncertain. She might not even be recognized by her countrymen, so long a time had elapsed since she had left Ephratah. By her earnest entreaties for her daughter's return, it is evident that sufficiency and comfort mark their own homes. Ruth unhesitatingly resigned them all to share her mother-in-law's fate, whatever it might be. To the bereaved wife and mother, left in her old age alone, a withered tree from which every leaf and flower has gone, with no hope of ever bearing more, Ruth's affection must have been indeed a precious balm.

How long the travelers journeyed, we do not know, but in due time they reached Bethlehem in safety.

"We leave
Our home in youth—no matter to what end—
Study, or strife, or pleasure, or what not;
And coming back in few short years, we find
All as we left it outside—
But lift that latchet—all is changed as doom."

Two lonely women, with travel-stained garments, enter the town, one old and dignified, with sad countenance and careworn expression of face, the other a young and interesting widow. The one who first saw them told the news to the next, and she reported to a third; and soon the town was stirred. It was ten long years since she had left. Possibly she had not gone on her own free choice, but as the companion of her husband. Her family was well connected, and when the rumor of her return began to spread, it is not strange that many of the people, especially the women, came to look upon the travelers and, gazing intently into the changed face of the older, inquired, "Is this Naomi?" It is a beautiful picture of the simplicity of that age. Men were not so engrossed with the cares of life as to feel no interest for one outside of their own little circle. They could take the time to extend a friendly greeting to one of their own countrywomen who had been so long absent, and to grieve with her over her afflictions. As they kindly welcome her back into their midst once more, how eloquently, in her tears, she cries out, "Call me not Naomi [*the lovely, gracious one*], but call me Mara [*bitter*], for the Almighty hath afflicted bitter sorrow upon me. I went out full, and the Lord hath brought me home again empty. Why then call me Naomi, seeing the Lord hath testified against me and the Almighty hath afflicted me?" The presence of these friends of other days would call up most vividly the joys of past years and the desolations of the present. She does not conceal her condition from any one. She had followed her husband to Moab. Her stay there was because her sons had married, most likely against her will. At their death she had come back again, although life had little of joy to offer her. In all of these things, she accepts her misfortunes as a judgment upon herself. She will bear God's judgment as best she can and will now dwell among her own people, with Ruth the Moabitess as her companion. It was in the beginning of barley harvest, possibly about the middle of April.

Ruth now looks about for some means of support for herself and her mother-in-law. As it is the beginning of harvest, she concludes she can do something by going forth to glean. The law of Moses and the customs founded thereon, gave the poor a right

RUTH AND NAOMI

to glean in the fields, and surely they were among the poor. This was one of the legal provisions made for the poor, and the owners of the land granted it somewhat freely. That he might not be subjected to serious inconvenience, the proprietor controlled the movements of the gleaners, so that those who gleaned in a particular place must do so with the consent of the owner. Naomi was manifestly in need, so she consented for Ruth to glean. Ruth might have chanced on fields of strange and unfriendly owners, but Providence so ordered, without her knowledge, that she entered the field of one who was of the family of Elimelech and a distant relative of Naomi's husband. "A finer picture of rural harvest scenes is nowhere extant. We hear, as it were, the rustling of the reapers' sickles. Behind them are the women binding the cut grain. The overseer's presence promotes industry and order. In case of thirst, there stand the water vessels at no great distance. The fields surround the country home with its various outbuildings, where the weary may find a moment's rest and refreshment. At meal time the laborers are supplied with roasted grain and bread. The latter they dip in a refreshing drink consisting of vinegar and water, with perhaps some oil mixed in it."

When the day has somewhat advanced, the owner of the fields, Boaz by name, comes out from the city to look after his reapers. His greeting is, "Jehovah be with you," and they answer, "Jehovah bless thee." This is no mere matter of form, for the record shows that he is a high-minded, tender-hearted, pious man. He knows his servants and the poor who are gleaning in his field. He notices one who does not seem to be accustomed to such work, and her charm of grace and manners having interested him, he says to the overseer, "Who is this damsel? How comes she here?" Since the return of Naomi has been much talked about, the overseer can tell who she is, and proceeds to compliment her industry by stating she has been working ever since morning except a little time taken to rest in the house. Having heard so good a report, Boaz approaches her. He learns that she has been gleaning at a distance from the reapers and the binders, so he says, "Go not to glean in another field, but nearer my maidens." The one who approached nearest the binders had the best opportunity and fared

the best. Hitherto she had kept back, and others had taken this place. Boaz makes her gleaning more productive to her. He has given instructions that no one shall molest her, and when she is thirsty, she may go to the vessels provided for the reapers and drink.

She is overwhelmed by this kindness which she evidently did not anticipate. She could sacrifice her own life for Naomi, but she does not know why this man should take such a kindly interest in one who is a stranger. Boaz answers her, not simply as the proprietor of the land, but as a pious Israelite. He has learned, possibly from Naomi herself, or from others she had privately told, how faithfully Ruth had stood by her. She deserves the blessing of God, not only for thus caring for her mother-in-law, but because she had turned her back upon the heathenism of her own people, and had said, "Thy people shall be my people, and thy God, my God," and he therefore implores God's blessing upon her. She thanks him for this sunbeam of life which had invaded her heart, maybe one of the first, assuredly one of the most welcome, which had broken through the griefs of the last month. He had been very kind to her although she was not of the number of his "hand-maidens" who were accustomed to glean in his fields. "Boaz may not have known of his relationship to Naomi's husband. If he knew of it and thought of it, he purposely kept silent about it. He showed his kindness, not because she was distantly related to him, but solely because of her own excellence. It was not as the widow of his kinsman that he distinguished her with special favor, but as one who had taken refuge under the wings of Israel's God. Ruth likewise did not know what Boaz was to her husband's family, nor had she wasted a word to make him aware that she had ever been more than a maid servant, which, had she done, might have brought their relationship to speech."

Her answer to him raised her higher in his esteem, and he bids her join in the common meal. She sat with the reapers and Boaz himself helped her to a portion of everything on hand. This was not the chief meal of the day, which usually came later in the evening after the labors of the day had closed. It is this later meal, most likely, which Homer tells was depicted by the artist on the shield of Achilles.

"There, too, he formed the likeness of a field
Crowded with corn, in which the reapers toiled,
Each with a sharp-tooth'd sickle in his hand.
Along the furrow here, the harvest fell
In frequent handfuls; there they bound the sheaves;
Three binders of the sheaves their sultry task
All plied industrious, and behind them boys
Attended, filling with the corn their arms
And offering still their bundles to be bound.
Amid them, staff in hand, the master stood
Silent, exulting, while beneath an oak
Apart, his heralds busily prepared
The banquet, dressing a well-thriven ox
New slain, and the attendant maidens mixed
Large supper for the hinds, of whitest flour."
—*Iliad*, xviii. *(Cowper)*.

He is not satisfied to let her have a common gleaning. She is to glean "between the sheaves." The workmen are now and then to pull some ears from the "bundles" that she may gather them up. They are not to speak harshly or scold her for the little extra trouble she may make for them. She eats and is satisfied, showing the abundance which had been prepared for them, and the remainder she gathers up to take home. She gleans faithfully until evening, then takes the pains to beat out what she has gathered and has a plentiful harvest for the day's work of almost an ephah of barley. This is supposed to have been at least fifty-five pounds.

When Ruth returned at the close of the day, Naomi was surprised to learn that she had been so successful, and makes anxious inquiry as to where she had gleaned and who had been so friendly to her, for without such treatment she would not have fared so well. She related the story of the events of the day, and gave the name of the man who had so generously aided her. The mother-in-law's heart is full of thanksgiving as she listens to this report, and returns thanks to God who still cares for the living as he has cared for the dead. As she supposed her misfortune had come upon her as afflictions from the Almighty, so now she is quick to infer from this special blessing that God's favor is upon her again. When the daughter further reported that she had been invited to remain there during the whole harvest, the mother advised her so to do, at the same time informing her for the first time that this man, as she then supposed, was the nearest male relative that she had. So Ruth worked away faithfully during the barley harvest

and also the wheat harvest. Boaz saw her day after day and learned more and more of her modest, gentle ways. He no doubt found opportunity to bestow other favors upon her. She was no longer a stranger to him.

Among the Jewish people, marriage was viewed as the natural fulfillment of a woman's calling. When Naomi urged her daughter-in-law to return, she prayed that she might have "rest" in the house of the husband. Orpah returns because she has no hope of finding it in Israel. Ruth is willing to sacrifice all of that for the good of her mother-in-law, so she comes back with her. That which made the fate of the daughter of Jephthah so sad, was that she never found a resting place in the house of a husband. The same fate seemed to await Ruth in coming to the land of the Hebrews. Naomi has learned something more of her own family history and has divined a way whereby her loved and loving daughter may yet be provided with a husband. She gives to Ruth the needed information, and herself arranges a plan whereby it may be accomplished. It was an ancient law in Israel, and sanctioned by the Mosaic legislation, that when a man died without children, his brother was expected to marry the widow. This was a right of the woman. She could demand it, and if he refused, could put him to open shame. If a brother married a widow and she bare an heir, the son is the heir to the name and the possessions of the first husband. But what if there be no brother? The law did not expressly declare; but the inference was, that in that case the obligation passed over to the nearest relatives of the deceased. Every family must see to it that no member in it dies out.

Naomi has become more or less familiar with the movements of Boaz, and she notifies Ruth of the relationship and also of the Jewish law of marriage. Under it she has a moral and legal right to apply to him for a performance of its requirements. The right to assert this claim belongs to her and not to him. On account of her nationality, Ruth might fear to assert this claim, which more especially belongs to a Jewish maiden; but Naomi encourages her, that so far from slighting her on this account, Boaz has already shown her special favor and put her on equality with the people of his own nation. She then shows how it can all be arranged secretly and properly. When the grain in the East is thrashed out, the owner or some employee must guard it during the night

until it is all gathered into the granaries. This was the night on which Boaz was to watch his own grain, and he would therefore sleep on the threshing floor alone. Ruth was instructed to lay aside her widow's weeds and array herself in her best raiment. She was to go down to the floor and conceal herself until he should lie down. She should mark the place, and when he was asleep and all was quiet, she should go in, uncover his feet, and lie down, awaiting results. Naomi could not but feel sure that the claims which Ruth was to prefer would not be addressed to a hard and unsympathetic heart. On the other hand, it was natural to think that, although Boaz was an elderly man, Ruth must be heartily attached to him. It was he who first brought joy to her sadness. Such an impression, after scenes and moves like those through which Ruth had passed, is never lost. She went forth on her first undertaking at the beginning of barley harvest; she enters on the second when the barley is winnowed on the threshing-floor. Between the two, there lies an interval of time sufficient to explain how Naomi could have the courage and the information necessary to send her daughter on such an errand. A traveler gives the following as to the sleeping custom of the East, the portion of which we are able to verify from observations made in the streets of Cairo, Egypt, some years since: "Natives of the East care very little for sleeping accommodations, but rest when weariness overcomes them, lying on the ground. They are, however, careful to cover their feet, and to do this have a chudda, or sheet of coarse cloth, that they tuck under their feet and, drawing it up over the body, suffer it to cover the face and the head. An Oriental seldom changes his position, and we are told that Boaz did so because he was afraid; the covering of the feet in ordinary cases is consequently not disturbed. I have frequently observed the singular effect of this custom when riding out in a native city before dawn; figures with their feet so covered lying like monumental effigies in the pathway and in the open verandahs of the houses—a practice that at once explains the necessity for clearing the gates when it is dark, as we read was the case at Jericho in Joshua 11. Neither men nor women alter their dress at night, and the laboring classes, or travelers in a serai where there are men, women, and children, rest together, the men with their feet covered and the women wrapped in their veils or sarees."

The plan proposed to Ruth, whereby she might rightfully claim from the living the performance of the solemn duty which he owed both to the living and the dead, is a startling one to us. It would be very improper and dangerous as measured by the customs of our own times, but it cannot be condemned. The simple manners for that age made it entirely proper. There is often a wide difference of ideas as to what constitutes modest demeanor in different nations and in different periods in the world's history. We have seen women in the East cover their faces with their veils when men pass by, because to expose the face was by them, and indeed by all others, considered as very immodest; while in our own nation, it is the most common thing to do, entirely proper, and anything else would be seriously objected to. It is very certain that Naomi would not have suggested what the most approved customs of the land forbade. Had it been objectionable, it would have failed of the very purpose sought, for a man so prudent and pious as Boaz would have been driven away rather than won by it.

When Boaz had eaten heartily of the evening meal, he lay down at the end of the heap of grain sheaves and soon fell asleep. As soon as Ruth was satisfied that he was asleep, she lay down at his feet, drawing over herself a part of the cover under which he lay. By some movement he is startled, and looking about him he finds a woman at his feet, and he exclaims, "Who art thou?" She answers him, "I am Ruth, thy handmaid; spread thy wings over thy handmaid, for thou art my redeemer." The wife finds rest under the protection of her husband, so she hides herself under the corner of his coverlet. She is no longer Ruth the Moabitess, but Ruth, "thy handmaid," and he is her legal redeemer. He does not find fault with her for disturbing him. He implores God's blessing upon her. Young and handsome, she might have looked out for a husband, rich or poor, as she desired, among the young men of the nation. She does not do this, and instead of preferring the love of a young man, she asserts her claim to a man advanced in years, thus following the usages of the nation. She need not feel alarmed at what she has done, for all knew her to be an upright woman. He tells her, however, that there is a kinsman nearer than himself. If this one will not perform the duty required, he will. He will not send her away in the darkness. In

the early dawn they are up, so it will not be perceived that the woman came unto the floor. Before she leaves he bids her spread out her mantle, and he empties into it six measures of barley, that she come not empty to her mother-in-law. This may have been intended as an intimation that Ruth's petition had been favorably heard; but most likely it was to ward off any possible suspicion that might arise, for it was no new thing to see her come from the fields of Boaz laden with grain. She reports to her mother-in-law all that occurred, and she is advised to remain at home as an affianced bride. Naomi is satisfied the man will not cease his efforts until he has provided for her a resting place.

Boaz started early for the city the same morning, in order to reach the gates where the markets were held and judicial business was transacted, so as to meet his kinsman, who probably was in the habit of coming early to the city. He saw him and called to him to seat himself, implying thereby that he sought a judicial decision. Ten men from the bystanders were selected to hear the case. Boaz introduces the matter by stating that the inheritance of his relative Elimelech had been sold by Naomi. The sale of this land had not been mentioned before. Nothing had been said about it in the conversation between Ruth and Boaz on the threshing-floor. The fact that Boaz understands the matter would look as though there had been some conversation between himself and Naomi, and the redemption of the land may also have led to the marrying of the widow. Hence Boaz may not have been entirely surprised to find Ruth at his feet, although he may not have expected her at this time; if there had been such conversation, then Naomi felt perfectly secure in sending Ruth to the threshing-floor to meet him. Boaz, without saying anything concerning the widow, offers to give this kinsman the privilege of redeeming the land, as he is the nearest male relative. Boaz agrees to do so if he does not, so the matter is entirely at his own option. The kinsman agrees to redeem the land. When he learned that this was burdened with another condition, that he should marry the widow of Naomi's son in order that the firstborn of her children should take the heritage in the name of the deceased, he declines to redeem the land less he might injure his own heritage. The manner in which he relinquished his right to his inheritance and transferred it to another, was indicated by his plucking off his shoe and giving it

to his neighbor. The shoe symbolized possession which, if one had, he could tread with his own feet at pleasure. When he pulled off his shoe, as he did in this case, and gave it to Boaz, he surrendered to him all the right of possession which would have been his had he fulfilled the condition.

Boaz then calls upon the ten men and all the people who were near to bear witness that he had now rightfully acquired all that belonged to Elimelech. He secures it from Naomi, but he cannot do so until he marries the widow of Mahlon, "to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance in order that his name be not cut off from among his brethren and from the gates of his place." He has no fear of danger to his own inheritance. This willingness to accept the duty falling upon him and to act when the nearer kinsman hesitated, secured for him the approbation of all who knew him, and they invoked upon him the blessing of Jehovah. They hoped the woman, whom he was now taking into his house, might build up the house of Israel. They desire for him that sons may be born who shall be heroes of strength, and the great name may proceed out of Bethlehem. And their wish was graciously fulfilled. Boaz thus became the resting place in whose love Ruth found peace and security.

"She stood breast high amid the corn,
Clasped by the golden light of morn,
Like the sweetheart of the sun,
Whom many a glowing kiss had won.

"On her cheeks an autumn flush,
Deeply ripened—such a blush
In the midst of brown was born
Like red poppies grow with corn.
'Round dark eyes her tresses fell,
Which were blackest none could tell,
But long lashes veiled a light
That had else been all too bright;
And her hat with shady brim.
Made her tressy forehead dim;
Thus she stood amid the stalks
Praising God with sweetest looks.
'Sure,' I said, 'heaven did not mean
Where I reap thou shouldst but glean;
Lay thy sheaf adown and come,
Share my harvest and my home.'"

As to the import of the "shoe" in connection with Jewish marriage ceremonies, a traveler in Barbary gives the following: "At a Jewish marriage I was standing beside the bridegroom when the bride entered; and as she crossed the threshold, *he stooped down, slipped off his shoe, and struck her with the heel* on the nape of the neck. I at once saw the interpretation of the passage in scripture respecting the transfer of the shoe to another, in case the brother-in-law did not exercise his privilege. The slipper being taken off indoors, or if not, left outside the apartment, is placed at the edge of the small carpets upon which you sit, and is at hand to administer correction, and is here used *in sign of the obedience of the wife and the supremacy of the husband.* The Highland custom is to strike for 'good luck,' as they say, the bride with an old slipper. Little do they suspect the meaning implied."

Our story had a sad beginning but a delightful ending. It began with famine and misery, but it terminates with joy and plenty. How strange at times and how unexpected are God's providences! How our steps are ordered when we put our trust in the Lord! What strange coincidences, what unexpected relationships, are found in the drama of human life! The Moabitess who gives up her country and her prospect for a husband among her own people, and who adopts the God of Israel because she sees his character and teachings so faithfully exemplified in the life of Naomi, shall not go without her reward. She bears a son whom the women call Obed. Naomi's heart is made to rejoice. Ruth, who had been to her better and truer than seven sons could have been, is his mother. Obed becomes the father of Jesse, and he of David, and the latter of the Son of man. Thus, this heathen woman, this unselfish friend, this devoted daughter-in-law, this faithful wife, this loving and lovable woman, became what every Jewish woman desired to be, a progenitor of God's own Christ. So he came, "not in one direction alone, not as born of the Jew only, but of a line of kings. In him all men are gathered up, the mightiest, the weakest, the wanderer, the homeless. Verily, this man was the Son of God—the Incarnate Deity."

This book, in which is contained the simple story of Ruth, "does not preach by means of mighty deeds of war inspired by faith, like those of Gideon and Samson, but by acts of love which

demand no less strength of soul. God can be praised not only with timbrels and trumpets, but also in quietness and silence. It tells of women in whom burn the gentle flames of the household hearth, which distress and desertion cannot quench. The scene of its history is not laid in the temple where the harp of God resounds. Its central figure is neither king nor poet. It contains no stern denunciations, no sorrowing lamentations over Israel, its people, princes, and priests; but deeply impressive, penetrating to the heart, is the instance it gives of suffering, love, and victory. It proposes, not, like Daniel, to unveil the destinies of nations and the world, but at its close appears the Son of David, into whose Godhood all history empties as the rivers into the ocean. No miracles occur in it like that of the three men in the fiery oven, but it tells of three believing ones who, in the glowing heat of suffering and temptation, were found strong and true."

"Round her she made an atmosphere of light;
The very air seemed lighter from her eyes—
They were so soft and beautiful and ripe
With all we can imagine of the skies."

Deborah---the Heroic Woman

"A new period dawned in Israel. Deborah, the wife of Lapidoth, was judge. There was no inquiry as to whether it was meet that a woman should be judge. The people came up to the famous old palm tree and told their tale to Deborah day by day, until the motherly heart began to wake, and her trouble was very great. She said, 'By the help of heaven we will see more clearly into this.' She sent for Barak. Sisera was on the alert. When a man has nine hundred chariots of iron, he wants something for them to do. But the Lord will not loose his chariots upon Jabin and his nine hundred curricles. Kishon was more than all Jabin's iron host. Now Deborah sings. This woman's song is reason set to music, awarding to the good that which is good, to the evil that which they deserve. Meroz was cursed even in song. The Lord might have been torn to pieces for aught that Meroz did. The winding up of all things shall be a great song, a triumphant burst of music; but moral distinctions will not be forgotten in those jubilant strains. Then it will be known who did his duty, who remained at home, who was content with criticism, and who hazarded his life that his Christ might be made more widely known."

—Dr. Joseph Parker, in "The People's Bible."

Deborah—the Heroic Woman

THE people of Israel finally came into nominal possession of the land of Canaan, which many years before had been promised to their fathers. As a punishment upon the nation itself and as a means of discipline to the Israelites, God put upon the latter the duty of driving out the former. "Ye shall destroy their altars, and break down their images, and cut down their groves, and burn their graven images with fire." After Joshua had led them through the land and opened up a way for them, their families, and their herds, by a series of successful battles, the people were glad to settle down in peace and quiet. "The conquest was over, but the upheaving of the conquered population still continued. The ancient inhabitants, like the Saxons under the Normans, still retained their hold on large tracts and on important positions throughout the country." These people were their neighbors, and instead of treating them as the Lord's enemies, they entered into friendly relations with them. As a punishment for such willful disobedience, the Lord permitted the nations to remain as "thorns and pricks in their sides, and their false gods as a snare unto them." The result of this improper familiarity was that "they took their daughters to be their wives, and gave their daughters to their sons, and served their gods; and the children of Israel did evil in the sight of God, and forgot the Lord their God and served Baalim and the groves."

This was a gradual and not altogether unnatural result. Their fathers had lived in the midst of the showy and wonderful idolatry of Egypt, and they themselves had not well learned the lessons which Moses had sought to teach them. The lessons of Moses were so infinitely beyond anything which the heathen nations had taught that they were, in a sense, made obscure by the very excess of light about them. Had the command of the Lord to drive out these people been obeyed, it would have been well with them. To compromise to any extent with the false teaching about them, was to yield to wrongdoing. "It is difficult to rise to any extent above

the universal belief and modes of thought of any age, especially when they are based on the ignorant simplicity and moral obliguity from which idolatry has its rise. The system prevailing in Canaan was in reality only the worship of natural phenomena, wrongly explained and perverted to the sanction of the grossest impurity and cruelty. Yet it reigned all over Western Asia in spite of its revolting characteristics, through the instinctive craving, common to all ages, for material and visible embodiments of religious ideas, and must have been terribly seductive to a people to whom these were rigidly denied.

The chief god worshiped by these heathen people was Baal, representing the sun, although he was worshiped under different names. Sometimes he was named Moloch, elsewhere Chemosh, but the worship was always fierce and cruel. His consort Astarte, or Ashtaroth, the moon and the planet Venus, had abominations peculiar to their worship. The influence of this false system was felt more by those living in the cities or along the sea coast, while those living in the valleys and shut off to a greater extent from intercourse with strangers, did not so much adopt the new religion as they neglected their own. There were indications throughout the period of the Judges, of the presence of a latent religious life in the people, which needed only to be aroused by some great occasion, when it would once more manifest itself. The long wilderness life of the Israelites had given them a strong desire for a settled home. This desire to enter in and enjoy the rich inheritance which had come to them, the land flowing with milk and honey, helped to lower the tone of their religious life and make them more inclined to be lenient toward their Canaanite neighbors. Mixed marriages became frequent and the step from this to taking in their idolatrous worship was a very short one. They had specially holy places for sacrifices and for pilgrimages. Possibly the descendants of the mixed multitude that came out from Egypt may have opened the way, but very soon there were others to follow them. It was not long until their sacred places were adopted by the Israelites and the worship of Jehovah here and there became merged into the prevailing idolatry. "They served the idols [of the Canaanites]: yea, they sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto devils [Shedim, ox-gods], and shed innocent blood, even the blood of their sons and daughters, whom

they sacrificed unto the idols of Canaan: and the land was polluted with blood."

The strong religious feeling which had commenced in the wilderness with Moses and was strengthened by the conquests, survived during Joshua's life and for many years afterward. Even the elders who survived him "had known all the works of Jehovah that he had done for the nation," through Joshua. This generation which had witnessed the wonderful help that God had given to his people, finally passed away. Eleazar, the high priest who succeeded Aaron, died about the same time as Joshua. His son and successor, Phinehas, did much to keep up the old religious spirit even while the religious life of the nation was gradually drifting downward. Says Josephus concerning him, "So great was his courage and so remarkable his bodily strength, that he would never relinquish any undertaking, however difficult or dangerous, without gaining a complete victory." "After a time, however, he died, and with him the age of stern fidelity to the national covenant with Jehovah seems to have come to a close. Weary with years of struggle, and satisfied with what they had acquired, tempted to seek friendship with the Canaanites by the similarity of language, the opportunities of profit, the seductions of neighborhood, by their own want of military science and by the weakness of tribal division, their warlike feelings gave way to a desire for ease and quiet."

There was a time when these Canaanites could have been driven out. When Joshua resigned his high office and went to his own home, and when the tribes dispersed to their own territories, the golden opportunity passed and never came back. In due course of time came the subjections and the miseries of a foreign yoke which Moses had foretold to them. "Because thou servedst not the Lord thy God with joyfulness, and with gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things; therefore shalt thou serve thine enemies which the Lord shall send against thee, in hunger and in thirst, and in nakedness, and in want of all things: and he shall put a yoke of iron upon thy neck, until he have destroyed thee." The period of the Judges is the heroic age in Israel. The history of the Jewish nation during this time was a succession of oppressions, and deliverances by divinely inspired leaders, sometimes arising in one part of the land and sometimes in another, in answer

to repeated calls on the Lord for help. The first cry for help was produced by an invader from the Euphrates, who compelled some of the tribes to pay him tribute for eight years. Othniel ("the lion of God"), the nephew of the heroic Caleb, drove the oppressors from his borders and secured the quiet of the land for forty years. Next came the king of Moab, Eglon ("the bullock"), uniting his bands with related peoples, who overran the tribes of Benjamin and captured Jericho. Eighteen years of tribulation and oppression followed. A deliverer came in the person of Ehud, a Benjaminite, who personally slew the king and raised a body of men with whom he rushed down to the fords of the Jordan to prevent the return of the enemy back to Moab. As a result of his daring achievement, the land enjoyed comparative quiet for a period of eighty years. This was on the southeast, but sometime after this came one from the opposite side, the Philistines' region, from which, in after years, they were to be so much annoyed. To assist them, one, Shamgar, appeared at the head of a company of men, gathered, most likely, in Dan and Benjamin, and drove back and slew a foraging party of six hundred men who had come up to rob and plunder the people. This could not have been the first, for we find the Israelites at this time so disarmed that Shamgar's only weapon was the long and heavy ironed ox-goad, still used in Palestine.

It is difficult from the brief record given in the book of Judges to keep a correct chronological account of the various deliverances as they appear. While there are oppressions and deliverances in one section, there are periods of national growth in others. After a period of peace and quiet, we find that the richer ones among the people sat on costly saddles and carpets, while the chief men rode on white asses. The tribes on the east side of the Jordan had vast flocks there. The men of Dan gave themselves to their seafaring pursuits. Commerce was increasing; the routes of the caravans were more frequently used; and the tribes were growing richer. This, in time, was checked, in part, possibly, by the northern tribes turning again to the worship of Baal; and once more God let loose upon them their enemies, in order to drive them back by the stern discipline of oppression.

During Joshua's time a confederacy had been formed of the northern kingdoms with Hazor as the center, and they prepared

to make war against Joshua. When they had mustered their forces for battle, there "were much people, even as the sand that is upon the seashore in multitude, with horses and chariots very many." They encamped near the waters of Merom. Joshua waited at Gilgal until he received marching orders. He soon received them, and made one of his rapid marches and came, and all Israel "with him, against them by the waters of Merom suddenly; and they fell upon them." He thoroughly demoralized the enemy, and cut them down with fearful slaughter. Having thus broken the enemy into fragments, he followed up the victory by the capture of their cities. One hundred years go by, and this kingdom of Hazor has recovered itself in part, and a successor to the Jabin of that day now reigns. With a force of war chariots increased to nine hundred, he has overpowered the Israelites and kept them in subjection for over twenty years. Fortresses on the borders of Jezreel, held by him and his allies, had cut off all help from the southern tribes, and the distress in the North was very great.

The sad condition of the people can be inferred from references made in the song of Deborah. This will, in part, account for the unwillingness of some of the tribes to send men to battle as well as for the hesitation of Barak himself. They had been so oppressed that all life and energy had been taken out of them. Like their fathers in Egypt, no doubt, they thought they had better endure the ills they had than fly to others that they knew not of. She sings, "The ways lay desert, and the travellers went by winding paths." This would be a very natural circumstance. The people, where they traveled the common and frequented roads, would be so plundered, stripped, and sometimes, perhaps, slain, that for their own personal safety they would abandon these roads and travel from place to place securely, only by obscure and unfrequented paths. Traveling itself would almost cease, and people would leave their homes as little as possible unless in cases of dire necessity. Even in a part of Italy in our own day, such a condition of things prevailed. It is only within a comparatively few years that traveling in Palestine has been entirely safe.

Then again, we are told "the villages ceased." Some say the word "villages" should read "rulers." If so, it would mean that the rulers of the land, the magistrates who should have protected

life and enforced the law, were inactive, practically powerless. It may be they had no power to carry out and enforce their plans, or they may have yielded to the general recklessness of the times and made no effort. If it means "villages," as many suppose, it would mean a very unsettled condition of society. In times of trouble a rural population would be subjected to continual annoyance and plundering, against which there could be no defense. The only thing possible for them would be to gather their movable property and go out into the nearest walled town as a means of defense, leaving the villages deserted and giving up all cultivation of the ground, excepting such as should be within or in close proximity to the larger towns. Not only would the villages thus become empty, but the peasantry itself would cease.

We are also informed that "a shield or a spear was not found in forty thousand in Israel." These were weapons of warfare, and the natural impression is that the people had been disarmed by their enemies; so the expression simply means, the people, the whole people, were utterly without arms. Shamgar and his men used ox-goads for weapons. There came a time when the Philistines had the upper hand, that they deprived the Israelites of the means to sharpen their own tools themselves, possibly to prevent such a use of them. "But all the Israelites *went down to the Philistines,* to sharpen every man his share, and his coulter, and his ax, and his mattock. Yet they had a file for the mattocks, and for the coulters, and for the forks, . . . and *to sharpen the goads*" (I. Samuel 13:20, 21). This may in part account for the reluctance of many to go into the combat and once more strike for the nation's deliverance. There could be but one result with unarmed men revolting against an organized and well-armed foe. If it be asserted that those who finally took the field must have had arms, there may have been some concealed that were not given up, or they may have gone into the combat as did Shamgar and his men.

And now in this distressing hour, when men's hearts are failing them and they have no hope of any bettering of their condition, deliverance comes to them *through a woman.* The account given us begins very modestly with no flourish of trumpets and no surprise on the part of any one. With the high honor which the Jewish nation and the Jewish captors put upon women, there was

no occasion for any. "And Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, she judged Israel at that time." "No man said, Why are we judged by a woman?" "The answer was in her eyes—she looked divine; the vindication was in her judgment; when she spake, the spirit of wisdom seemed to approve every tone of her voice. . . . The people came up to the famous old palm tree and told their tale to Deborah day by day, until her motherly heart began to ache and her trouble was very great. She saw, as motherly eyes only can see, how the wrinkles were deepening, how the faces were not so plump as they used to be, how strong men were bending under unseen burdens." The terms "prophet" and "prophetess" are somewhat extensive and, for this reason, a little ambiguous in their signification. They are at times applied to persons extraordinarily endowed of God with the power of foretelling future events, of working miracles, or chanting forth God's praises under supernatural direction, sometimes to those instructed in divine knowledge by the inspiration of the spirit of God, and thus appointed to act as interpreters of his will. Deborah was, most likely, one of this latter class. A woman of holiness, prudence, and knowledge of divine things, and thus well qualified to judge the people, "she would act as God's mouthpiece, correcting abuses, redressing grievances, and determining causes, especially in matters pertaining to the law and the worship of God. She was resorted to by the people of Israel from different parts, for judgment or counsel relative to subjects of general interest to the nation or that part of it where she resided and discharged her duty by expounding the Scriptures and acting the magistrate in these several districts to put the laws in execution." That she was a prophetess in the sense of foretelling future events, is plainly inferred from the assurance of victory she gave to Barak and the prediction that the commander of the enemies' forces should fall by the hand of a woman. A high poetic inspiration is seen in the ode in which she celebrates the praises of the Lord for the victory of Israel.

In this disturbed condition of affairs, we find the people had a "judge." These, so far as we can learn, were not originally a part of God's plan for the government of the people. They were to be taught by the high priest, who should be the medium of the divine communications which should be made to them, while God

himself would be their ruler. These seem to have been "emergency men," called suddenly for a special purpose, usually to some warlike deed which should bring deliverance to the people, and to have held the position thus gained during their lifetime, for the good of the people. Deborah was such, however, before the military emergency arose. They were sometims called by God himself to the office they sustained, and sometimes elected by the people. Says Kitto, "They did not transmit the dignity to their descendants, neither did they appoint successors. They could not enact laws, nor impose taxes on the people, though they made peace or war, and in their official capacity decided cases without appeal. Yet all this honor seems to have been rather the result of character or influence, than of any authority recognized as inherent in the office. No salary or income was attached to it, nor did they receive emoluments of any kind. They had no external marks of distinction. They were surrounded by no circumstances of pomp or ceremony; they had no courtiers, guard, or equipage. They were, in general, men of moderate desires and content to deserve well of their country without seeking to enrich themselves. They always considered and conducted themselves as especially called of God, relying upon him in all their enterprises, and making it their chief care to bring their countrymen to acknowledge, worship, and obey him. On the whole, they were models of true patriotism and moral worth." In the case of Deborah, her position seems to have grown out of the respect and honor paid to her as one taught of God, eminent for sagacity, wisdom, and her high influence. She was thus much consulted and referred to, and her recognized power and position made her virtually the "judge" of the nation.

There is a beautiful and antique simplicity in the description of her, dwelling under a remarkable and noted tree known, when the Book of Judges was written, as "the palm tree of Deborah." It is pointed out as located, "between Ramah and Bethel on Mount Ephraim," and must have been a well-known and solitary landmark. The palm is intimately connected with our associations of Judea because of its impression on the Roman coins, but it is now almost unknown to her hills and valleys. In the valley of the Jordan, one of the most startling features was the immense palm grove, seven miles in length, which surrounded Jericho, a number

DEBORAH

of which trees were visible in the seventh, some in the twelfth, and a few in the seventeenth century, and we thought we saw one lonely resident there a few years since. We are not quite sure whether the palm grove. a pleasant and shady recess, was the place of her ordinary dwelling habitation, or simply that her judgment seat was here in the open air, for hearing the applications that were made to her. It was very near the confines of the tribes of Benjamin and Ephraim.

Either because of some special revelation from God, or because of her own patriotic convictions that something must be done to save her people, she determines that the bondage must be broken. When the thought and purpose had fully taken possession of her own soul, it was only a question of time until she should arouse others. Her songs and her utterances, repeating the mighty deeds of the past which God had wrought for them, and their weakness now in turning away from him and submitting to be slaves, once more aroused the religious zeal which had been dormant in many minds. Her influence and her faith became contagious, and preparations were made for an uprising of the people. A leader competent to lead such a disobedient and down-trodden people must be found, a man who has a faith of his own, and who is able to inspire a similar faith in the soldiers who shall be gathered. She fixed her mind on a man dwelling in a place called Kedesh, a few miles north of where Tiberias now stands. His name is Barak, "the thunderbolt," an Israelite in heart, though the spirit of the times had given him a Phœnician name. He must have already gained some reputation for courage or loyalty to God to have been known so far away from the boundaries of Benjamin. Deborah is the messenger to bring to him the divine call. "He could do nothing without her head; nor she without his hands; both together they made a complete deliverance."

Deborah was called of God, as were the other judges, to represent his will to the people. She was called, no doubt, because best fitted by lofty faith, by sound character, by high aspirations, to make this representation. "The eternal God had inspired her, a woman and a wife in Israel, with his spirit expressly to do his will and to make manifest to her countrymen how little he is the respecter of persons, judging only by hearts perfect in his service and spirits willing for the work, heeding neither the weakness nor

the apparent inability of one sex compared with the great natural powers of the other." She was, as are the Jewish women, intensely patriotic. She was a living representative of the highest aspirations of the nation. The song she sang expressed her intense religious life. "In order to understand her more fully, we must think of the condition of women in those days when under the heel of the oppressor. The barriers and protections which the laws of Moses threw around the Jewish women, inspired in them a sense of self-respect and personal dignity which rendered the brutal outrages inflicted upon captives yet more intolerable. The law of Moses commanded the Jewish warrior who took a captive woman to respect her person and her womanhood. If he desired her, it must be as his lawful wife; and even as a husband he must not force himself upon her at once. He must bring her to his home and allow her a month to reconcile herself to her captivity before he took her unto himself. But among the nations around, woman was the prey of whoever could seize and appropriate her."

The command of God is made known to Barak. It is the divine will that he shall at once go forth and raise an army. By argument and persuasion, and with the help she can give or has already given him in awakening the people, he must gather from the children of Naphtali and Zebulun ten thousand men. Other tribes are not to be excluded, but as these had probably been the greatest sufferers under the oppressive rule of Jabin and were nearest at hand, they would be the most willing to respond. The fact that Barak was himself of the tribe of Naphtali and therefore well known to them, would no doubt help to rally many of them to his standard. He should gather them about Tabor, a mountainous peak some twenty-five hundred feet high, on the northeastern side of the plain of Jezreel. "When arrived at the summit of this mountain, the traveler is astonished to find an oval of half a mile in extent, commanding the finest view anywhere obtained in the whole confines of Palestine." No better place could have been chosen for the gathering of the people. It could not be attacked by the war chariots of the enemy, and it was a lofty tower from which could be observed all their movements. When this was done, God would attract to the River Kishon the army of Jabin under the leadership of Sisera, and then their whole army should

be delivered into Barak's hands. By what means they should be drawn, we do not know, but most likely their counsels and plans would be so overruled that it would seem to them best to go. There is an intimation (Judges 4: 12) that information was given to Sisera by some of the Kenites who lived near Tabor, that the Israelites were revolting and were gathering together under Barak at Mt. Tabor, to break the yoke of bondage.

The plain of Jezreel has been the battleground in Palestine for centuries. It is, to put it roughly, in the form of a triangle, the base or east line about fifteen miles long, the north side formed by the hills of Galilee about twelve miles long, and the south side skirted by the Samaria range about eighteen miles. Through its apex on the west flows the Kishon River, draining its waters into the Mediterranean. Here fought Thotmes III., Rameses II., and Rameses III. Here, after Barak, fought Gideon and the Midianites; here Saul fell upon the Philistines, Josiah before the Egyptians under Necho; here, in later times, fought Vespasian, the crusaders, and Bonaparte; and on the mountains of Gilboa, at its east end, Saul and Jonathan perished.

While the author of the Book of Hebrews classes Barak among those who had true faith, yet his faith was weak. He was not willing to go alone. He could not trust himself nor his soldiery. Because profoundly convinced that God spake through Deborah, he earnestly desired her presence. If she were present, he then felt he had a pledge and earnest of the divine blessing. She could thus be an oracle to him when he desired to communicate with her, and a source of inspiration and encouragement to his soldiers. He should have gone on in obedience to the divine will, but at times it is difficult for even the best of men to break away from undue dependence on an arm of flesh, even when they have the express declaration of God that he will stand by and deliver them. Even Moses hesitated when God would have sent him, so the honor intended for him alone was divided with Aaron. The Lord yields to his wish, and Deborah, under divine prompting, consents to accompany him, but he is informed that he must share the glory of the victory with a woman. The plan he proposes will not be for his own glory. He, no doubt, knew that if she went with him, it would diminish his honor, yet he insisted on her accompanying

him, preferring to share with her the glory of the victory rather than to bear the defeat, if such there should be, alone.

They make their way north to Kedesh and here they organize the revolt. Emissaries were sent among the members of the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali to meet him at Kedesh. Before long, men gathered about him to the number of ten thousand. This was in the section where the tyranny of Jabin had been most keenly felt, and here men could be rallied the most readily. This force was gathered not without difficulty, and having secured it, Barak marched southward and encamped on Mt. Tabor. This is the first time that celebrated mountain is named in the Scriptures. The national spirit has not been so aroused for years. Issachar sent bands of volunteers. The Ephraimites gathered from their hills and crowds came from Benjamin, the men so famous with the sling as to be represented to throw stones to a hair's breadth and not miss. Manassah, both east and west of the Jordan, sent her chiefs as well as her men. But the absent ones were as conspicuous as those who reported for duty. The people of Meroz could have done good service, greatly helped their brethren, and advanced God's cause; but they refused to come and thereby drew down on themselves a curse which was carried out by their extinction. The Reubenites debated the matter, but the result of their much talking ended in allowing their brethren to help themselves, while they remained at ease among their sheepfolds. Gad refused to come; Dan would not leave his boats at Joppa; Asher remained in the creeks and bays of Acre; nothing is heard of Simeon and Judah. To Naphtali and Zebulun was given the palm for sending the largest enrollment and for jeopardizing their lives in the most dangerous places.

The commander of the army of the Canaanites bears the title of Sisera, "the leader." He collects his forces in Jezreel, the only place in northern Palestine where his war chariots would have sufficient ground on which to maneuver. He made his headquarters at Taanach, a Canaanitish town or fortress. Mt. Tabor was about sixteen miles to the northeast. The whole surface of the plain is seamed with water courses, receiving the drainage of the hills, and after storms these swell into torrents. They all unite on the northwest into one stream, known as Kishon, or the "winding," which flows into the Bay of Acre through a channel

about fifteen feet deep and from fifteen to twenty yards wide. About Tabor itself are a number of holes which after a rain are turned into treacherous quagmires.

The signal for the attack was given by Deborah. "Up," she cried to Barak, "this and no other is the day; is not the Lord gone out before thee?" He had promised to draw the army of Sisera to Tabor, and they are here. If the Lord has accomplished this much for him, he will lead him on to further victory. Barak becomes inspired with a fresh courage. Instead of simply maintaining his place on the mountain where the chariots and the scythes of the enemy cannot reach him, with his inferior force, inferior in numbers and no doubt poorly armed, he sallies down into the level plain, and thus, by giving Sisera every advantage, the victory will only be the more glorious. This unexpected charge of Barak seems to have been ordered by Jehovah, to create, on the part of the enemy, a supernatural panic which soon threw them into confusion, men, horses, and chariots becoming intermingled so that they fell rapidly under the edge of the Hebrew sword, while others sought safety in flight. Josephus gives this probable account of the terrific scene, when it is said "the stars in their courses fought against Sisera": "When they were come to a close fight, then came down from heaven a great storm with a vast quantity of rain and hail, and the wind blew the rain in the face of the Canaanites and so darkened their eyes that their armies and their kings were of no advantage to them, nor would the coldness of the air permit the soldiers to make use of their swords; while the storm did not much inconvenience the Israelites because it came on their backs. They also took much courage upon the apprehension that God was assisting them, that they fell upon the very midst of their enemies and slew a great number of them; so thus some of them fell by the Israelites, some fell by their own hands, and not a few were killed by their own chariots." This account of the great rain is in keeping with the statement that numbers of the fugitives were drowned in the River Kishon, which is much swollen by heavy rains. So great was the slaughter that the Psalmist afterwards spoke of the dead as manuring the ground (Psalms 83:10). The day was hopelessly lost to the magnificent "leader" and the only thing left was for him to escape with his life.

A wonderful parallel to this victory of Deborah and Barak is recorded by Plutarch in his "Life of Timoleon." That general at the Battle of the Crimesus had attacked the Carthaginians; but their heavy armor and stout shields easily repelled the Greek spears. "Suddenly, however, when it had come to sword thrusts, violent peals of thunder and vivid flashes of light burst from the mountains, and the darkness, which had been hovering about the higher grounds and the crests of the hills, descended on the place of battle, bringing a tempest of rain, wind, and hail with it on the backs of the Greeks, but full on the face of the Carthaginians. The rain beating on them, and the lightning dazzling them, distressed the inexperienced, and in particular the claps of thunder and the noise of the rain and hail beating on their arms, preventing them from hearing the commands of their officers. In addition to this, the very wind was a great hindrance to the Carthaginians, who were loaded with heavy armor; and their skirts underneath getting drenched, the foldings about the bosom filled with water and grew cumbersome to them as they fought, making it easy for the Greeks to throw them down and impossible for them to rise again with weapons in their hands. The river, Crimesus, also swollen, partly from the rain and partly by the stoppage of its course from the number passing through it, overflowed its banks and the level ground on its sides was filled with rivulets and currents that had no certain channels, in which the Carthaginians stumbled and rolled about and found themselves in great difficulty."

Sisera might have fled in his royal chariot, but it would have been recognized and his life would thereby be forfeited. He fled on foot, hoping that undiscovered he might get beyond danger. It reminds us of Bonaparte on the field of Waterloo, quitting his chariot and seeking to escape on horseback. He fled to the encampment of Heber, the Kenite, who was of the descendants of Jethro and whose ancestors had come to Palestine with the Israelites. No doubt, Sisera hoped to claim here the protection which, when granted, is never dishonored. The chief was not at home, but Jael, the wife, invited him unto her own part of the tent which he knew no person would enter without her consent. He asked for a drink of water, which he knew, if granted, meant an additional pledge of her protection. She did more than he asked. She gave

him some curdled milk to drink, which was esteemed as a delicacy and which to a traveler, tired and hot, became a strong and speedy restorative. The beverage having been received with thanks, the tired man lies down to rest in perfect security, as he thinks, while she covers him with a cloak. When he was in a profound slumber, she took one of the sharp spikes or pins which held the tent in its place, and with a hammer in her hand, she crept up quietly and stealthily and with one tremendous blow sent it crashing through his temples, pinning him to the ground. One convulsive bound, a contortion of agony, and he was a lifeless corpse. It was not long until another man was admitted to her tent. Barak was on the track of the fleeing Sisera. Without waiting to be asked any questions, she said, "Come, I will show thee the man whom thou seekest." He entered, and there the scourge of Israel lay dead with the iron nail fast in his temples, dishonored by death from a woman's hand.

It is hard, with our increased life and knowledge, to justify Jael; we have no occasion, however, to do so. There are some extenuating circumstances. Says one writer, "Jael knew that God had crowned the courageous effort of Israel with success; a great battle had been won; and now the flying Canaanite leader is brought by an apparent chance into her very tent; he is in her power and she can bruise the head of the corrupt race and destroy the Canaanites in their chief. She immediately pronounced it to be an opportunity put in her way by Providence, that Providence which plainly designed that this sacred race should possess the land in the place of the old stock. *She kills Sisera as an enemy of God.*"

Following the magnificent victory, which was the beginning of the end of the kingdom of Jabin, and in which victory Deborah was the chief instrument, comes that wonderful song of praise to God on the part of Deborah. As we study it, shall we not say the effort of genius was intensified by the promptings of divine inspiration? As a very ancient poem, as a song coming from a warm religious nature, and indited by the divine spirit, it is very precious. It is a source of encouragement to the good and a warning to the wicked, a song of triumph for God's people in all ages. It is one of the noblest expressions of devout patriotism in all literature. With the exception of the chorus of Miriam, it is the oldest

poem by a female author on record. Herder, in his "Spirit of Hebrew Poetry," gives an interesting commentary on it. We give a revision of it, modified in some respects as he suggests:

"Praise ye Jehovah for the avenging of Israel
Where the people willingly offered themselves.
Hear, oh, ye kings; give ear, oh, ye princes.
I will sing praise unto Jehovah;
I will praise Jehovah, God of Israel;
Jehovah, when thou wentest out from Seir.
When thou marchest from Edom.
The earth trembled and the heavens dropped,
The clouds also poured down water."

We next have a picture of an enslaved people who were in constant danger of their lives because of wicked men and yet had no arms with which to protect themselves:

"In the days of Shamgar, the son of Anath,
In the days of Jael,
The highways were unoccupied,
And travelers walked through byways;
The inhabitants ceased from the villages,
Till I, Deborah, arose,
I arose a mother in Israel;
They went after strange gods;
Then came the war to their gates;
Was there then a shield or a spear
Among forty thousand in Israel?"

Her heart throbs for those who, from all sections, had heard her call and had come to the help of their country:

"My heart throbs to the governors of Israel,
That offered themselves willingly among the people.
Bless ye Jehovah;
Speak, ye that ride on white asses,
Ye that sit in judgment,
And ye that walk by the way,
They that are delivered from the noise of archers,
In the place of drawing water.
Then shall they rehearse the righteous acts of Jehovah;
His righteous acts toward the inhabitants of the villages;
Then shall the people go down to the gates.
Awake, awake, Deborah,
Awake! Awake! Utter a song!
Arise, Barak, and lead captivity captive,
Thou son of Abinoam."

She remembers the courage which some had carried into the conflict. For those who were courageous, she has words of good cheer. For those who were selfish and cowardly and who only considered their own ease and comfort and not the good of the nation, she has arrows of scorn:

"It was but a small remnant that went forth against the mighty;
The people of Jehovah went with me against the mighty.
The march began with Ephraim,
The root of the army was from him;
With him did thou come, Benjamin.
Out of Machir came down the leaders,
Out of Zebulon the marshals of forces;
And the princes of Issachar were with Deborah,
Issachar, the life guard of Barak,
Sprung like a hind into the battle field."

Others, among them Reuben, had been sufficiently interested to discuss the matter proposed, but, like so many other things, it ended in mere talk. The poetess utters some well deserved flings at such lack of a genuine patriotic spirit:

"By the brooks of Reuben, there were great talkings and inquiries;
Why abodest thou in thy sheepfolds, Reuben?
Was it to hear the bleating of the flocks?
By the brooks of Reuben there were great talks (but nothing more)
Gilead too abode beyond Jordan;
And why did Dan remain in his ships?
Asher staid on the sea shore and remained in his harbor,
Zebulon and Naphtali risked their lives unto the death,
In the high places of the field of battle."

Then follows a picture of the battle and how the dreadful storm and rain helped forward the good work:

"The kings came and fought,
The kings of Canaan in Taanach, by the water of Megiddo;
They brought away no new treasure;
They fought; from heaven the stars in their courses,
They fought against Sisera.
The river Kishon swept them down,
That ancient river Kishon.
O, my soul, walk forth with strength!
There was the rattling of hoofs of horses,
They rushed back—the horses of the mighty."

And now the wages of those who refused:

"Curse ye Meroz, saith the angel of Jehovah,
Curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof;
Because they came not to the help of Jehovah,
To the help of Jehovah against the mighty."

Then follows a blessing on the woman who has slain the oppressor of her sex. The writer, who thus rejoices, remembers the outrages practiced on her sisters:

"Blessed above women be Jael, the wife of Heber, the Kenite!
Blessed should she be above women in the tent.
He asked water and she gave him milk;
She brought forth butter in a lordly dish;
She put her hand to the nail,
Her right hand to the workman's hammer,
With the hammer she smote Sisera,
She smote off his head,
When she had struck through his temple;
At her feet he bowed, he fell, he lay prostrate,
At her feet he bowed, he fell;
Where he bowed, there he fell down dead."

This poetess, who thus for all time stands up in defense of her sex, by a few delicate touches of her pen gives us a picture of the dreadful fate which might have come to the women of Judah had this man not been conquered:

"The mother of Sisera looked out at the window,
She cried through the lattice,
Why delay the wheels of his chariot?
Why tarries the rattle of his horse and hoofs?
Her wise ladies answered, Yea, she spake herself,
Have they not won? Have they not divided the prey?
To every man a virgin or two?
To Sisera, a prey of divers colors, of divers colors and gold embroidery
Meet for the next of them that take the spoil."

Then follows that magnificent conclusion which rolls up like the swell of the ocean:

"So let all thine enemies perish, O Jehovah,
But let those that love thee shine forth as the sun in his strength."

"As the song dies away, so passes all mention of Deborah. No other fragment of song from her pen has come down from her age to us. This one song, like a rare fragment of deep sea flower, broken off by a storm of waters, has floated up to tell of her. We shall see, as we follow down the lines of history, that women of this lofty, poetic inspiration were the natural products of the Jewish laws and institution."

The results of this wonderful victory, due to Deborah's planning and her courageous faith in God, are results for all time. Not only did the land of Israel have rest and quiet for the next forty years, but greater blessings than these came to them. "No other battle ever after needed to be fought with the Canaanites; and the Israelites themselves learned a lesson of the advantages of national union which influenced their whole future. Their self-reliance, moreover, was strengthened; for it was their first great victory since the days of Joshua, and they gained it against the most discouraging odds. As a lesson in war, it was invaluable, and its results quickened the passion for freedom which already had begun to root itself in the heart of Israel. Nor was it without a powerful effect on their religious history, that their national degradation and misery had ended as soon as they abandoned idolatry and sought the favor and help of Jehovah. That the result was due to him and not to themselves, however valiantly they had fought, was not only proudly owned, but enshrined in the poetry of the nation."

Jephthah's Daughter—
the Devoted One

"And I went mourning, 'No fair Hebrew boy
Shall smile away my maiden blame among
The Hebrew mothers'—emptied of all joy,
Leaving the dance and song,

"Leaving the olive-gardens far below,
Leaving the promise of my bridal bower,
The valleys of grape-loaded vines that glow
Beneath the battled tower.

"The light white cloud swam over us. Anon
We heard the lion roaring from his den;
We saw the large white stars rise one by one,
Or, from the darken'd glen,

"Saw God divide the night with flying flame,
And thunder on the everlasting hills.
I heard Him, for he spake and grief became
A solemn scorn of ills.

"When the next moon was roll'd into the sky,
Strength came to me that equall'd my desire.
How beautiful a thing it was to die
For God and for my sire!

"It comforts me in this one thought to dwell,
That I subdued me to my father's will;
Because the kiss he gave me, ere I fell,
Sweetens the spirit still.

"Moreover, it is written that my race
Hew'd Ammon, hip and thigh, from Aroer
On Arnon unto Minneth."

—*Alfred Tennyson.*

Jephthah's Daughter—the Devoted One

JEPHTHAH was the ninth judge of the Israelites, and for a period of six years he made them a very acceptable ruler. He was a man of great courage. He was of the tribe of Manasseh, and his father's name was Gilead. Whether he was the son of a concubine, meaning thereby a legal wife though one of lower rank and possibly a foreign woman, or whether she was a lewd woman publicly addicted to vice, our ignorance of the actual state of manners and of society in those rude and uncultured times will not permit us to determine. In the eyes of his half-brothers, there was a disgrace attached to his birth, which they resented whatever his rank. No blame can be attached to him, but the rather to his parents, for his own record is a very deserving and commendable one.

There were other children in the family, sons of a different mother, and when they grew up they began to assert their right to the inheritance. Even if the son of a concubine who was a secondary wife, so far as we have any knowledge of the customs of that age, Jephthah was not entitled to any part of the inheritance. Sarah insisted that the son of the bondwoman should not have any part in the inheritance with her own son (Genesis 21 : 10). Abraham gave his property to his legal son, Isaac, but he gave presents to the son of the concubine and sent them away so they should not trouble the heir. If the connection was an illegal one, much less could he expect to inherit any of the property. Under this thin pretense, his brothers may have sought to do him injury, for there was no reason why they should drive him away from his father's house. Whatever may have been the underlying reason for their conduct, he felt it was a gross outrage on his rights, and one which the elders of the people abetted, at least connived at. When the time came that they needed the help that he was so competent to render, he reminded them of the great wrong done him.

As a result of their unbrotherly conduct, he leaves home and dwells in the land of Tob, a section of country so called most likely

because of some one who was its first or possibly most distinguished citizen. Its location is not known to us, but it was probably near to Gilead, but on the frontier of the Hebrew territories. Having been thus driven away from his own home, he becomes an adventurer and gathers about him a number of brave but idle men who recognized his skill as a leader. With these men he made forages into the neighboring territories, and from the spoils thus obtained, he found means of subsistence. As he was not far from the Amorites, he would most likely make raids into their territory in retaliation for the incursions which they made on the children of Israel. This kind of a life was not thought so dishonorable in those days and with these people as it would seem to us, even in our own time. "An Arab or a Tartar desires no higher or better distinction than that of a successful military robber; and to make that fame unsullied, it is only necessary that his expedition should not be against his own nation or tribe." David led this kind of a life during his wanderings, and gathered around him such a class of men as we now find associated with Jephthah. This kind of a life made many exploits necessary, and would give him a skill and experience which few others would possess, and make his name more or less famous as a prominent leader for times of peril.

Jair, a Gileadite, was the reigning judge during the early history of Jephthah. He does not seem to have been a very vigorous ruler. He kept up some appearance of royal state, for his thirty sons rode like princes on as many ass colts. He secured some additional territory upon which were villages, each of these having one of his sons as a kind of sheik. This sort of fragmentary, Arab, patriarchal government had lasted for a number of years, and not with the best natural results. "Everywhere the national spirit was dying away and the national religion decaying. The tribes were in part being lost in the heathen communities around. In the northern border, the idols of Syria and Sidon replaced Jehovah or were worshiped with him. On the southwest, those of the Philistines; and on the east, those of Moab and Ammon had many followers. But this, apparently, only increased the general misery. Both in the east and west enemies worried them, for they had no strength, such as union gives, to hold their ground. The necessity for a monarchy was being brought home to all. While the Canaanites under kings had been steadily recovering national

vigor, the Hebrews of the west had decayed, and those of the east were sinking into mere roving shepherds. The old Canaanite race of Ammon, crushed by their forefathers under Joshua, had risen once more to formidable power, and not only lorded it over Gad and Reuben, but, crossing the Jordan, invaded Judah, Benjamin, and Ephraim. Nor was the western side of the country less harassed, for there the Philistines from the sea coast were plundering and spoiling far and 'near.' "

When the bondage of Ammon had grown unendurable and the people contemplated a revolt, the elders gathered at Mizpah, "the watchtower," to select a leader to take charge of the campaign. The fame of this man had already reached them, and while making raids on the surrounding people, they knew he was still loyal to the Hebrew faith. They search him out in his present location and ask him to be their captain for them and the people they represent, to make war on Ammon. While a great wrong had been done him, it was not without its compensations, for it had developed his skill and had given him such an opportunity to display his ability in the eyes of his countrymen, that they looked to him as the coming man. He has tried his strength, is conscious of his power, and does not propose to yield too readily. He chided them for hating him and expelling him from his father's house. We are not sure that they actually aided in this matter, yet if they refrained from punishing the guilty parties, they made themselves responsible for them. "Magistrates that have the power to protect those that are injured, if they do not do them right, really do them wrong." When Joseph's brethren came to him, he humbled them before he made himself known to them. So this man proposes that these officials, in this their time of distress, should know that they have injured him, and thus should have opportunity to repent, and become more sensible of the obligations resting upon them hereafter.

They confess that they are conscious of the wrong done him, and that he has just cause for complaint. They have come now to make reparation for the wrong done, and as a proof of the sincerity of their professions they offer him the first place in the nation, and this shall more than counterbalance any dishonor which, by their neglect, they have put upon him. Jephthah was not the first man, nor will he be the last, who, having been disparaged and

ill treated, needs only to wait patiently and God in his own good time will vindicate him. He finally puts this question to them, "If I go into this campaign, and the Lord shall deliver the Ammonites into my hand, shall I be not only your leader in this struggle, but your permanent judge?" After all, we cannot blame him for being a little cautious. The burned child dreads the fire. He had some reason for distrusting these very persons, and he needed some special guarantee of good faith. There might have been some feeling of ambition in the matter, but, allowing that there was, there was nothing wrong in desiring such a position, provided he showed his competency for it, if thereby he could build up the nation and better advance the interests of God's cause. The service was one in which he might endanger his own life, and if he succeeded in freeing them from this bitter bondage, his efforts would demand some recognition. It may be that in this way he hoped to more effectually secure himself from any evil designs which his brethren might plot against him.

The elders solemnly called God to witness the sincerity of their acts and invited his vengeance if they should prove false to their pledges. With this apparent honesty on their part, Jephthah did not care to harbor any feeling against them for former wrongs. They accordingly repair to Mizpah, where no doubt there had come to be an authorized center of worship, as at Shiloh and elsewhere, and here the contract which the elders had made is ratified by oath in the presence of the people. They thus endorse the action of the elders, making it their own and excluding all misunderstandings hereafter. Thus the banished one becomes the leader of the army, and, if successful, shall be the head of the nation during the remainder of his life. Nor is he the only banished one who has been invited back by the same people who, under other circumstances, had driven him from their borders.

The manner in which he proceeded to carry on the war at once prepossesses us in his favor and shows him not to be a wild, reckless, unprincipled freebooter, but a man of piety, of good common sense, and not unskilled in military matters. The instructions from Moses were, not to make war with any of the nations outside of Canaan until proposals of peace had been made (Deuteronomy 20: 10-18). Military chieftains are usually glad enough for any pretext whereby they may make war on another nation,

and especially if the probabilities for conquering them are at all flattering. This man, just made commander-in-chief of the army, and desirous of achieving for himself some notoriety, might have been justified had he gone ahead and made war at once on the people who had attacked Israel; but if he can show them the wickedness of their conduct and persuade them to desist, he shall protect his own people and save the others from the sword. If Israel had wronged Ammon, they would gladly do her people justice. If, on the other hand, they had no defense to make but were themselves the oppressors, they must take the consequences. So he sends messengers to the king of Ammon saying, "What hast thou to do with me, that thou art come against me to fight me in my land?"

The king of the Ammonites desired a pretext for a quarrel, and it speaks well for the Israelites when they can find nothing against them without going back three hundred years in their history. If there had been any real cause, it would have been pushed long before. The cause now put forth is, that when they came up out of Egypt, they had taken the land and had occupied it ever since. Jephthah seems to have been well read in the story of the Israelites and their journey from the land of bondage, although occurring some hundreds of years before; and he proceeds to tell the king that they had indeed taken the territory but not from the Ammonites, for they had found it in possession of Sihon, king of the Amorites, and, having been attacked by him without cause, they had taken it from him in honorable warfare. So far were they from offering any violence to the children of Esau, that, when refused a passage through their country, they could have conquered their way by force, but, rather than set foot on their territory, they had undergone the fatigue of a long march. In short, Jephthah shows him that the Ammonites had lost their lands in a contest with the Amorites; the Israelites had captured this territory from the Amorites who had waged an improper war against them; God, the maker and owner of all things, had given this land to the Israelites by special grant; they had had possession of it without molestation for over three hundred years; while the Israelites dwelt in Hebron, in Aroer, or on the coasts of Arnon, there had been opportunity to reclaim this if it had been illegally held, but it had not been attempted because of the justice

of their claim. It was now too late to put forth any such pretended claim as the king had just alleged. Having truth and justice on our side, we may appeal to the Lord, the judge, "to judge this day between the children of Israel and the children of Ammon." The appeal is now to the God of battles.

We are informed that "the Spirit of the Lord came upon Jephthah." The Talmud interprets this to mean, "force of mind for great undertakings and bodily strength." It implies that he had some convincing testimony that his cause was a righteous one, that he should have skill and strength to secure the victory. He pushed out at once through Gilead and the adjoining sections to secure recruits to his little army before he should make the attack. As was somewhat common under the Mosaic dispensation, he made a vow to the Lord that if the Ammonites were delivered into his hands, whatsoever should meet him on his return should be sacrificed to the Lord. The contest began and continued until twenty cities had surrendered. They were made to share the same fate as the Canaanites. When the king supposed he should have an easy conquest over the man whom his brethren despised, he made a sad mistake. Jephthah, while vindicating his own honor, was also fighting the battle of the Lord, and his appeal for help was answered. We do not think his vow helped his cause, for it is a question if it were a proper one. God uses faulty instruments to accomplish his purpose, often because he can find no others; and in this case, the success of the Jewish nation was of more value than the gratification of the hopes or wishes of one man. The nation that was seeking to destroy God's people was humbled, and Jephthah was the most convenient instrument at hand with which to do this work.

It was not an unusual thing, nor an improper one, for Jephthah to make a vow. This practice of incurring voluntary obligations to the Deity on fulfillment of certain conditions, such as deliverance from dangers, success in enterprises, and the like, is very ancient and common in all systems of religion. The Jewish system was one of frequent offerings; hence in the practice of this, there may have grown up the belief that a voluntary obligation or a self-imposed sacrifice had a special value in the sight of God. A vow would therefore take on after a time the solemnity of an oath, and would need to be religiously and scrupulously observed.

JEPHTHAH'S DAUGHTER

Before a man made one, there might be a reason why it should not be made; but when once assumed, a new obligation is contracted. The first mention of a vow is that of Jacob at Bethel. While a vow is therefore proper in itself, it must have respect to a lawful thing. By means of this no man can free himself from obligations to God. If God has forbidden anything, it cannot by a vow be made justifiable.

In applying this to Jephthah, some find it difficult to determine exactly what he intended to do. His vow was as follows: "It shall be, that whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the children of Ammon, shall surely be the Lord's, and I will offer it up for a burnt offering." God gave him the victory, and when the contest was over, he returned to his own home. He thinks now of the vow which he had made, and what he shall render to God for all his mercies. So he goes on full of hope and cheer. He looks toward his own home, and is surprised to see his only daughter, who no doubt has heard of his magnificent victory but knew nothing of his rash vow, coming forth with a band of maidens to express with music and dances their congratulations. At once he realizes the solemnity of the situation, and his heart is sad. It is his only child. "When he saw her, he rent his clothes, and said, Alas, my daughter! thou hast brought me very low, and thou art one of them that trouble me: for I have opened my mouth unto the Lord and I cannot go back." What does it all mean?

The common impression is that this vow was intended to mean that he would sacrifice whatever he met, and he met his daughter and, sad as it was, has sacrificed her by taking her life in the fulfillment of his vow. This vow may have been an improper one, and yet he may not have been aware of this in making it. He was born in a degenerate period of the Jewish nation, lived away from the temple and near idolatrous tribes with whose heathen practices he would be more or less familiar. In a foreign land, associated with outlaws who lived by plunder, it would not be strange if, previous to his appointment as leader of the Jewish hosts, he did sink into a kind of semi-paganism. May he not, in this condition, have thought he could propitiate Jehovah by such an offering as the heathen worshipers used, especially if we remember that he may have known something of Abraham's intended sacrifice of

Isaac? With this little amount of teaching, under the promptings of a blind zeal, on the eve of an important campaign, might he not be induced to show his gratitude by some special offering? As another puts it, "He knew there was such a thing as a person's being devoted without redemption to God. Possessing then this very partial degree of light, and actuated by an intense solicitude as to the result of the engagement, he seems to have rushed precipitately into the assumption of a vow which proved a fearful snare."

The feelings which he manifested when he saw his daughter, go to show that, when his vow was first made, he intended it should mean whatever came forth from his house, if it should be his own child. He came back from the battlefield elated at his victory, but, at the sight of his own child, he is suddenly stricken down with grief. He evidently felt that, by the nature of the oath which he had taken upon himself, he must give her life a sacrifice. The anguish which he is now experiencing cannot arise from the fact that she will remain forever unmarried, but that she must be a victim to a mistaken vow. Without intending it, she has become one of his troubles, changing his great joy into unspeakable distress. His vow has been made, and there does not seem to be any earthly power that can relieve him from its obligations.

We do not know how nor when the daughter became aware of the nature of the vow. It might have been inferred from the extreme distress which he manifested, or he may have related the matter more fully to her. Her conduct manifests a wonderful example of piety, of filial obligation, and a zeal for the honor of God beyond estimate. "So rejoiced was she at the victory as redounding to the good of her country, that she is willing to be herself offered up as a thank offering for it, and thinks her life well bestowed when laid down for such a purpose. True indeed it is that, if her father's conduct was wrong in making the vow, hers, when viewed intrinsically in itself, could not be right in concurring in it. The same moral character would attach itself to both; but it seems vain to expect that her knowledge in such a matter would go beyond that of her father. How can it be supposed that a youthful maiden should have had clear views of the import of the divine law on such a subject, when her father's mind was enveloped in darkness? Her genuine self-devotedness, there-

fore, is still entitled to our highest commendation. Her involuntary ignorance excuses her infirmity, and if she believed when she uttered those words that she was to be put to death, neither Greece nor Rome, with all their heroes and heroines, can furnish an instance of sublimer self-sacrifice than that of this humble maid of Israel. Had it occurred among these boasting people, instead of the plain, unvarnished tale of the sacred historian, we should have had it pressed on our admiration with all the pomp of eloquence."

She requests her father to allow her to go away for two months with her companions and prepare herself for her part in the fulfillment of this vow, but how this was done is difficult to ascertain. Surely it cannot mean that, for this period of time, she with others, a company of unprotected maidens, were spending the time roving over hill and dale in the open air with no certain means of food or shelter. There is no similar reference anywhere else in the scripture that would help to throw light on this passage. One eminent commentator makes the following conjecture: "We think the inference fair that children, both sons and daughters, were occasionally dedicated by Jewish parents to the perpetual service of God at the tabernacle or temple. When this was the case with youthful females, it is probable the custom obtained of their retiring for a season in groups from domestic scenes to sequestered places, in token of regret at being thereby denied the privilege of a place among the ancestors of the future generations of Israel, and perhaps of the Messiah. In so doing, they probably withdrew to some retired place of abode, remote from populous villages, where under the care of pious matrons they passed the allotted time in the observance of such rites and ceremonies as were appointed for the purpose, occasionally, perhaps, walking abroad in solemn and mournful processions. These persons left their own homes, as we learn from verse thirty-seven, and hence must have removed to some kind of habitation. What could these have been but a species of abode designed for the purpose? Is it not very probable that Jephthah's daughter, on an occasion like the present, with her impending fate full before her, should have been desirous to avail herself of a usage originally indeed designed for another purpose but not inappropriate to this, and so have requested a respite of a few weeks from the doom that awaited her? What more fitting

employment during that dread interval than to mingle her regrets with those whose lot, her own, in one respect, so much resembled, though they were exempted from the distress to which she had meekly submitted?"

Whether she was really offered in sacrifice by the taking of her life, or whether she simply lived a virgin life and thus relinquished her chance to become one of the ancestors of the Messiah, has long been a question with commentators, and it is probable it will not be absolutely settled. There are a good many reasons for either view. Those who assume that the most natural interpretation would lead us to conclude that she was actually put to death, support their view by the following statements: To live unmarried was not required by any law or custom among the Jews, and no one had a right to impose such a condition on another. Human sacrifices were deemed meritorious and propitiatory by the neighboring nations. Jephthah, by his association with these, had become affected by these notions. This was the most costly offering which he could give, and would therefore be the most meritorious. What else could he expect than a human being to come forth out of the door of his house to meet him? His affliction when his daughter met him shows that he had not even exempted her from the sacredness of his promise. "He did with her according to his vow," meaning in plain words that he offered her for a burnt offering. The daughters of Israel lament her four days every year, and people lament the dead, not the living. This view of the case is consistent and plain, but the whole thing becomes perplexed and difficult as soon as we turn aside from this obvious meaning in search of some other explanation, and some of them go so far as to assert that the change from the home of Eleazar to that of Ithamar was caused by the high priest of this period having suffered this transaction to take place. It is true that human sacrifices were forbidden by the law, but in the ruder period of the judges, the Israelites adopted a number of erroneous notions from their heathen neighbors, and other things were done by good men which the law forbade.

Says Kitto: "In full recollection of all the ingenious explanations which have been produced, I see no alternative but to conclude, although we would gladly avail ourselves of any fair ground of escape from that conclusion, that he offered her up as sacrifice.

This is the sense conveyed by the ancient versions and by the text of our own. It is also the statement of Josephus, though he is prone to extenuate or suppress that which he holds to be not for the honor of his nation, while at the same time he considers it a deplorably mistaken and unlawful act. We may sympathize in the work of vindicating the memory of one of the heroes of Scripture history from such gross ignorance resulting in so foul a crime; but still we feel bound to take the narrative in its plain, simple meaning, which is that taken at the first view and apart from any note and comment by any reader of the original narrative as well as by that very correct translation of it which our own version implies. The awful sacrifice was doubtless made on some one of the old altars, or perhaps on a new one in Gilead. But we can pursue the consequences of the case no farther, being most glad to draw a veil over the possible circumstances of that last scene when perhaps the father's own hand struck down the life that was dearer to him than his own."

Those who accept the other interpretation, that she lived an unmarried life, assert, among other reasons in favor of their opinion, that verse thirty-one may be rendered: "Whatsoever cometh forth out of the doors of my house . . . shall surely be the Lord's, and I will offer (to) him (the Lord) a burnt offering." This implies two things: first, whatsoever person or object should come out of his door to meet him should be dedicated forever to the Lord's service; in addition to this, he would offer to Jehovah a burnt offering. The common version implies that these implied the one and the same object. This rendering provides for *different* objects. Bishop Lowth was so pleased with this suggestion that he said it had "perfectly cleared up a difficulty which for two thousand years had puzzled all the translators and expositors, had given occasion to dissertations without number, and caused endless disputes among the learned." The record says of the father, "He did with her according to his vow . . . and she knew no man." This may mean, not that he actually put her to death, but he did what was *equivalent* to his vow, that which was accepted in lieu of it. Is it not possible that, during those two months of respite which she had asked and received, that he had learned how the vow could be honorably and faithfully met on

his part without its literal fulfillment, which would have compelled the murder of his daughter and involved him in a heinous crime?

It does not anywhere state that she was offered up as a burnt offering. Do not the very words, "and she knew no man," seem to indicate how the vow was carried out, namely by devoting her to a life of celibacy? If not, what is the purport and intent of this expression? If really put to death, why no mention of it? If only doomed to a state of virginity, then the reason for this statement is perfectly clear. It is true, parents had no legal right to devote their children to perpetual virginity, but they had as much right as in the case of death. If a man married, he could still serve God in such a manner as might be agreeable to himself. A married woman would not have so much freedom; "it was therefore necessary that she should remain unmarried and that she should also be excluded in a great measure from society itself, *that* being the way in which the object of entire consecration could be most effectively attained. Moreover, such a sentence would come the nearest of any to the letter of his vow. She would henceforth be *dead* to the world in her perpetual celibacy, the line of her posterity become extinct forever. It would therefore amount almost to a positive annihilation of her."

By whose hands could such a sacrifice be offered? Human sacrifices were among the abominations for which the idolatrous nations of Canaan were devoted to destruction. The Israelites were expressly forbidden to act like them in sacrificing their sons and daughters by fire. That he should have put her to death himself in fulfillment of his own rash vow, would not only have horrified her but all others concerned. By the law, he could not offer any victim as a burnt sacrifice except where the Lord had chosen to place his name, namely at Shiloh where the tabernacle was. None but a Levite could kill, and none but a priest could offer any victim. None but a male victim could be presented in sacrifice in any case. If Jephthah had been a gross idolator, he could, of course, have offered his daughter in any of the high places to a false god, but he was made the deliverer of his people because not such an idolator. His whole conduct is commended by an inspired apostle as an act of faith in the true God. The tabernacle was at Shiloh in the tribe of Ephraim, and soon after the war with Ammon, he was engaged in a battle with the Ephraimites. It is

not at all likely that, in the heat of this quarrel, he would have gone into the heart of that tribe to have offered a sacrifice, even if it had been lawful, and much less so when it was forbidden. Even with the ignorance and degeneracy which prevailed in that day, it is not at all likely that the high priest or any other member of the priesthood would have officiated at such a sacrifice or have tolerated it for a moment in the face of the explicit prohibitions that Moses had given. If not, therefore, made by the high priest or any inferior priest, if not made by Jephthah himself, which would have been very objectionable, if not made at Shiloh, the appointed place for all sacrifices, is it not likely it was not made at all?

Is it not very probable and much more in keeping with truth and justice, to believe that, while Jephthah originally in the making of his vow probably included whatever would come from his house, that after two months of reflection, during which time he learned more of the Mosaic statutes, he learned that he had done a very wicked thing in devoting his child to death, that he could keep the *spirit of the vow* and not be guilty of the crime of murder, that in case of persons, an offering could be made in their stead? While therefore he humbled himself before God and paid the ransom that delivered his child from death, he fulfills his vow "in her excision from among the living. He therefore consigned her to a state of perpetual seclusion and celibacy—of living consecration to God—and in this manner did unto her his vow, though in a mode of execution which did not, in the first instance, even enter into his thoughts."

Classic mythology contains an interesting story of Iphigenia who in later years formed the subject of one of Schiller's most interesting plays. The story occurs at the beginning of the Trojan War. Agamemnon having accidentally killed a stag which was sacred to Artemis, the offended goddess delayed his fleet. Nothing would appease her but the sacrifice of Iphigenia, Agamemnon's favorite daughter. Rather than do this, he agreed to give up his share in the expedition. A council of war was held, and it was decided that his own private feelings must yield to the good of the State. The daughter was sent for, and the mother sent her with the understanding she was to become the wife of Achilles. When the maiden arrived and learned her fate, she threw herself at her father's feet and with sobs and tears entreated him to

have mercy on her and spare her young life. The broken-hearted father was powerless to prevent it. She was bound to the altar, and as the knife was raised, she suddenly disappeared and a beautiful deer lay in her place ready to be sacrificed. Artemis herself had caused her to be taken away to Taurica, where she became one of her priestesses and was entrusted with the charge of her temple. This, however, necessitated the offering of human sacrifices presented to Artemis. She had long given up hope of ever seeing her friends again, when one day two youths were arrested and brought to the temple to be sacrificed. She accidentally learned that one of these was her brother and the other her cousin. Aided by them, she escaped from the country where she had spent so many unhappy days and witnessed so many scenes of horror and anguish.

Whatever theory we may adopt as to the final disposition of Jephthah's daughter, she commands our warmest admiration. If it meant a life of celibacy, this was no little sacrifice to a Jewish maiden. To be married and rear children was the expectation, yea, the longing desire, of every daughter of Israel. Barrenness was one of the heaviest punishments with which the Lord could visit any woman. The reproach which was attached to sterility may, in part, be accounted for by the constant expectation of the Messiah and the hope that every woman cherished that she might be the mother of the promised seed. When the people obeyed God, "they should be blessed above all people; there shall not be any male or female barren among you or among your cattle." The more children a person had among the Hebrews, the more he was honored, it being considered a mark of divine favor. Because she was barren, Sarah was despised by her slave. Rachel prayed, "Give me children, or I die." To thus cut herself off from all human alliances, to sacrifice the desire of every Jewish maiden's heart, to forego positions of honor and esteem among her own sex, to subject herself to the scorn and contempt which her position would naturally invite, was no small burden. And all this to be endured, not because of any wrong on her part, but because of her father's vow and to encourage him in his loyalty to God.

If we accept the more radical interpretation, that her life is sacrificed, our admiration for the woman is greatly increased. Her father makes a vow which should not have been made, in which

is the violation of the Mosaic law. Because of the victory which he had perched upon his banner as a token of the acceptance of his vow, he feels bound in all honor to keep it, if it involves his child's life. The child recognizes this feeling on the part of her father. She had nothing to do in the making of this vow, she cannot be required to keep it; but she dearly loves that father. With him, she may feel that by failing to keep his vow he would be dishonored. She had possibly endured privations that he might go to war. She was anxious that he should avenge his wounded honor. She had heard of his wonderful success, and elated at his victories, she had gone out with her associates to welcome him with timbrels and dances. Unconsciously she had brought him into this strange condition. When she realizes that victory has been given and her country delivered from a curse, and her father promoted to authority in the nation all because of this vow, she yields her own love of life for love of duty, just as every soldier does who sacrifices himself for the sake of his country, and says to her father, "Do to me according to that which hath proceeded out of thy mouth, forasmuch as the Lord hath taken vengeance for thee upon thine enemies, even upon the children of Ammon."

"They never fail who die
In a great cause; the block may soak their gore,
Their heads may sodden in the sun, their limbs
Be strung to city gates and castle walls—
But still their spirits walk abroad. Though years
Elapse and others share as dark a doom,
They but augment the deep and sweeping thoughts
Which o'erpower all others and conduct
The world at last to freedom. What were we
If Brutus had not lived? He died in giving
Rome liberty, but left a deathless lesson—
A name which is a virtue and a soul
Which multiplies itself throughout all time,
When wicked man wax mighty, and a state
Turns servile; he and his high friend were styled
'The Last of Romans.'"

—*Byron.*

Delilah---the Seductive

"Delilah! Not the frail sinner falling through too much love; not the weak, down-trodden woman the prey of man's superior force; but the terrible creature, artful and powerful, who triumphs over man, and uses man's passions for her ends, without an answering throb of passion. As the strength of Samson lies in his hair, so the strength of Delilah lies in her hardness of heart. If she could love, her power would depart from her. Love brings weakness, and tears that make the hand tremble and the eye dim. But she who cannot love is guarded at all points; her hand never trembles, and no soft, fond weakness dims her eye so that she cannot see the exact spot where to strike Delilah has her wants—she wants money, she wants power, and men are her instruments; she will make them her slaves to do her pleasure." —*Harriet Beecher Stowe.*

Delilah—the Seductive

LIFE is a picture of contrasts, a panorama of visible scenes and shades of character, dissimilar ever, though perpetually changing. "In the market place the incarnate fiend jostles the humble saint; the haughty rich man passes with scorn the unoffending poor; the vile walk unblushingly by the side of the virtuous, glorying over innocence and beauty blasted forever; and the weak cower before the proud grasp of the strong. In the forum the unworthy judge gives sentence on the less guilty criminal, and the citizen of unstained integrity sits on the same jurors' bench with the undetected villain." The Bible gives us pictures of faithful women, true to their sex and their God, who have been angelic ministers to their race and have, by teaching and by example, inspired mankind with a more heroic faith and lifted them to a closer companionship with all that was pure and good. But it would not be true to life if it did not at the same time show how a bad woman could drag down others to her same level. The people among whom the Jews were now located seem to have been dreadfully corrupt, and with this corruption women had no little to do. "Incurable licentiousness and unnatural vice had destroyed the family state, transformed religious services into orgies of lust, and made woman a corrupter instead of a savior. The idolatrous temples and groves and high places against which the prophets continually thunder, were scenes of abominable vice and demoralizations."

The history of Samson and his sad fall by the wiles of Delilah, is a warning against the degeneracy of his times and a beacon light for all ages. Its teachings are so plain that no one can misunderstand. He lived in the dark ages, so to speak, of the Jewish nation and could have been of much more service to them. He did not honor his nation as did Gideon and Jephthah. His wonderful birth would tend to awaken expectation of great things, and had the physical been kept in subjection to the moral, these might have been realized. But his vices and indiscretions not only un-

fitted him for leadership, but tended to produce distrust on the part of the people. They could not be blamed for withholding their confidence from one who could not control himself. "A mere slave of the senses like him, who could repeatedly sacrifice or endanger the most important interests to a woman's sigh, was not one into whose hands the elders and warriors of Israel could intrust their lives and fortunes. Had he wrought out the possibilities of his destiny, and had his character been equal to his gifts, there is no knowing to what greatness he might not have attained; but as it is, he left a name which is at once a miracle and a byword, a glory and a shame."

There was a man, named Manoah, who resided in the town of Zorah on the confines of Judea and Dan. His wife had been barren and had given up all hope of having any children. One day a messenger visited her, and, from the record, we infer she took him to be a prophet.

"Appeared before mine eyes
A man of God: his habit and his guise
Were such as holy prophets used to wear;
But in his dreadful looks there did appear
Something that made me tremble; in his eye
Mildness was mixt with awful majesty."
—*Quarles.*

The wife reported the visit to her husband as follows: "A man of God came unto me, and his countenance was like the countenance of an angel of God, very terrible: but I asked him not whence he was, neither told he me his name." He foretold to her the birth of a son and that he was to be a Nazarite from his birth. This was a class of men who were consecrated to God's service, which they manifested by certain acts of self-denial. They were not to touch wine or strong drink or any dead body, and the hair was not to be cut. Parties could voluntarily assume this vow, it could be imposed by parents, and, in the case of Samson as well as that of John the Baptist, it was imposed before birth by divine appointment.

Although the husband had not seen this messenger and only knew of his message through the wife, he believed the promise. He was not sure but his wife might have misapprehended a part of the message, and he was anxious the messenger should appear

again and instruct them how to properly care for this child. His wish was granted. When he was absent in the field, the messenger came again to his wife. She ran for her husband, and when he appeared the instructions already given were repeated. The husband proffered the usual hospitality to the stranger. The kid offered to him was presented as a burnt offering to the Lord. When this was done, the messenger disappeared in the flame and smoke of the offering, and then they knew he was "the angel of the Lord."

Of Samson's early life we scarcely known anything. The brief record given us in the Book of Judges is that "the child grew and the Lord blessed him." Remembering that he was set apart from his birth to deliver Israel from the Philistines, to whom they were in bondage, we may understand the Lord gave some public proof that this child was under his special protection. He was no doubt endowing him in some way for the work he had to do. It would have been interesting to have known something of his early childhood, how this Nazarite boy with uncut hair and great physical strength conducted himself among his associates. Even in our own times when we have learned to appreciate moral and spiritual strength more than ever before, the mass of people like to look upon one of great physical prowess. We are very sure this boy would enjoy the respect and reverence which his less favored companions would pay to one who was born to some mighty achievement, and that during these early years he did not forget the commission which had been put into his hands.

On his way to Timnath, a frontier town on the borders of the Philistian country, he saw a woman of the Philistines who pleased him well, or as some would interpret it, was well adapted to the end which he had in view. In addition to the fact that he had a genuine affection for her, she may also be used for another end, namely, the delivering of his country from the hands of the oppressor. This may account for the fact that the attachments which he formed were with the Philistines and not with the women of his own nation. No one from his own people seems at any time to have enlisted his affections. This first attachment was especially objectionable to his parents. The law was against marrying into heathen and idolatrous nations, although this people was not one of those from whom they were absolutely prohibited.

The parents did demur on this general ground, believing it best for him, as for all others of the nation, to find a wife among his own people, but at his earliest solicitation they did consent to go down and make the necessary arrangements for him. They did not at first know what ulterior end he had in view. He may have frankly told them, and by means of this they may have been led to conclude that he was moved by God's spirit in this matter, and under the circumstances it were not best to resist. So they went along with him, according to the custom of the times, to make proposals to the parents of the young woman and, if satisfactory to them, to arrange for the marriage. If all were agreeable, they would then be betrothed, and some months, usually not less than a year, would elapse before their marriage.

Samson seems to be planning for the deliverance of his people, and this may in part justify his present course. "God's purpose in raising up Samson as a deliverer, seems to have been to baffle the power of the whole Philistine nation by the prowess of a single individual. The champion of Israel, therefore, was not appointed so much to be the leader of an army, like the other judges, as to be an army in himself. In order that the contest might be carried on in this way, it was necessary that the entire opposition of the Philistines should be concentrated, as far as possible, against the person of Samson. This would array the contending parties precisely in such an attitude as to illustrate most signally the power of God in the overthrow of his enemies."

On his way with his parents to Timnath, where his expected bride lived, a lion was seen, and without any weapons he slew him. After an interval of a year or more he went back to consummate the marriage. This was the custom then as it is to some extent with Eastern nations to-day. The woman remained with her people and there was but little intercourse between her future husband and herself. The ancient nations knew little of the term "courtship" as we understand it to-day. A wedding feast was provided for, which usually lasted about seven days, and this was an occasion of merriment and general festivity. The sexes did not feast together, but the bride and bridegroom gave their entertainments to their friends in different houses. As Samson did not reside here, the entertainment on his part would need to be given at the house of some friend, perhaps the one who is called the

friend of the bridegroom, whose business it was to be a medium of communication between the bride and bridegroom, and who did what he could to add to the interest and enjoyment of the occasion. Thirty persons were present from the community, professedly to honor a man of such fine bearing and commanding presence, but more than likely to keep a watch upon his movements. As it was the custom in those days to propound riddles, puzzles, and various perplexing questions for amusement and pastime during the seven days of the feast, Samson propounded one, which if they solved, he would pay them "thirty sheets [shirts] and thirty changes of garments." If they failed, they were to pay him the same forfeit. They could not answer, and in their perplexity, they threatened the life of the wife and of her father's family. She urgently solicited her husband during these seven days, and he finally yielded to her solicitations and told her the answer. He was indignant at the treatment received, and slew thirty of the Philistines, most likely persons of rank and not the lowest of the people, and secured garments with which to pay the forfeit. Provoked at his wife's inconstancy and with the treachery of these professed friends, he temporarily leaves her with her father and returns to his own home.

The result of this event was to him, no doubt, very unexpected. While he was absent the wife's parents seemed to have become dissatisfied with their new son-in-law, believing that his relation to them boded no good, and so gave her to the man who had taken the place as the friend of the bridegroom. His relation to the woman during the marriage festivities gave him a chance for forming her acquaintance, and the treachery of one who had been so specially trusted, must have wounded Samson not a little. After some time he sought his wife again, but her father refused him the privilege of meeting her; and he now determines to be avenged for this insult to himself and his nation. He does this in a peculiar way. He secures a number of jackals, ties firebrands to their tails, and then sends them out into the green fields of the Philistines, with the result that their shocks of corn were consumed. They were so enraged on learning who had done this that they burned the house, and the father and daughter both perished. The very means which the wife had taken to save her life and that of her father, indirectly brought about this disastrous

result. All this was only fresh provocation to Samson for the manner in which he had been treated, and falling upon them without ceremony, he smote them with great slaughter.

He no doubt expected the Philistines to resent this, so he dwelt in "the top of the rock Etam." This was a natural fortress affording advantages for defense which he would possibly soon need. He most likely designed no further annoyance to the Philistines, unless provoked by new aggressions on their part. This place was located in the tribe of Judah. The Philistines soon appear with a body of men, intending perhaps to intimidate the tribe and then use them in capturing Samson. The men of Judea acted very strangely in showing a willingness to give up so distinguished a leader. "But their spirits were broken by the base bondage which their iniquities had brought upon them, and instead of bravely setting Samson at their head to fight for their liberty, they meanly resolve to make a sacrifice of him to his enemies, preferring ignominious servitude to a generous struggle for their country." He consented to be bound if his own people would not fall upon him. He probably consented to this, believing it would give him a new occasion for inflicting vengeance upon this oppressive race. Being brought bound to a place called by anticipation Lehi, a jaw, where the Philistines had pitched their camp, a supernatural power came upon him, and snapping asunder the cords that bound him, he seized the jawbone of an ass and so effectually did he use it that a thousand men were slain on the spot. Wearied with his exertions and finding no water to quench his parching thirst, he prayed for water, and a fountain was opened causing a stream to gush from a hollow rock near by.

This appears to have given a new life to these oppressed people of Judea. For twenty years Samson seems to have been a leader and a protector to the people in the southwest part of Palestine. His efforts and labors did not entirely crush out, but they did weaken and limit the power of his oppressors. When in Gaza, he fell in love with a lewd woman and, yielding to her enticements, he is exposed to imminent peril. His relation to this people would hardly allow him to make such a visit openly. His presence was soon noised abroad, and his enemies were on the alert to capture him. They made fast the gates of the city and stationed sentinels at them who should apprehend him as he went out in

the morning. Samson, apprised of what was going on, arose at midnight and, breaking away the bolts and bars that held the smaller gates, put them upon his shoulders and carried them to the top of a neighboring hill that looked towards Hebron. Thus once again he escapes out of the hands of his enemies.

One would have thought that the convictions of conscience would have rendered him powerless on such an occasion. His life is a mixed one and God may have had good reasons for deferring the punishment for those sins, which shall not go unpunished. It was a reprieve rather than a pardon which he received. His bad living finally brought its results to him as it does to all. This very mercy may have emboldened him a second time to give loose rein to his passions. "Customs of success make men confident in their sins and cause them to mistake an arbitrary tenure for a perpetuity." "He loved a woman in the valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah." Of this location we know nothing. It is not expressly stated that this was a lewd woman, but the connections seem to indicate this. Milton thinks she was a Philistine and a legal wife. He makes Samson to say:

"The first I saw at Timna, and she pleased
Me, not my parents, that I sought to wed
The daughter of an infidel; they knew not
That what I motioned was of God; I knew
From intimate impulse, and therefore urged
The marriage on; that by occasion hence
I might begin Israel's deliverance,
The work to which I was divinely called.
She proving false, the next I took to wife
(O, that I never had; fond wish too late)
Was in the vale of Sorek, Dalila,
That specious monster, my accomplished snare.
I thought it lawful from my former act
And the same end; still watching to oppress
Israel's oppressors; of what I now suffer
She was not the prime cause, but I myself
Who, vanquished with a peal of words, (O weakness,)
Gave up my fort of silence to a woman."

Chrysostom and many of the church fathers have maintained that she was married to Samson, but this seems like an attempt to save the morality of the Jewish champion. Says Professor Bush: "She is nowhere called his wife, he did not take her home to his house, and the whole train of her negotiations with her country-

men go to prove that she was a mercenary and perfidious courtesan, governed in her conduct towards Samson by interest instead of affection, if indeed it be not profaning the term affection to use it in connection with such an illicit and degrading intercourse."

The Philistines knew where Samson's weakness was to be found, if they did not know where to find his strength, and so they offer money to this woman with whom he is infatuated if she will help them to get possession of his person so they may humble him. For the price "of eleven hundred pieces of silver," possibly about ten thousand dollars of our money, she consents to help them. She employs all her arts and blandishment in obtaining from him the secret of his prodigious strength. The account as given in the Judges is very brief and seems more or less abrupt. "The results only are stated—the final purport given without any notice of the little artifices of conversation and dalliance, the watching for favorable moments, and natural turns of thought and incident which disguised the wickedness of the design and gave a seemingly natural turn to the woman's attempt to get possession of his secret—the various attempts on her part to betray the confidence she supposed Samson had reposed in her are so related as to appear to have followed in rapid and immediate succession; it is far more likely that these attempts were made at different visits of Samson to the vale of Sorek, when a sufficient interval had passed to blunt the keenness of any suspicions that may have been awakened in his mind. Simple-minded and confiding as Samson was, he was not altogether so silly as an unintelligent mode of reading the narrative may make him appear."

She evidently applied all the arts with which women of her trade are familiar, took advantage of his more yielding moods, no doubt expressed admiration of his wonderful exploits, and thus by throwing him off guard would hope to win his secret from him. The siege he withstood before he finally surrendered to this artful hypocrite, shows that he had some appreciation of what was becoming to a man in his position. He does not, however, refuse with as much dignity as he did his wife at Timnath. He plainly refused to tell her, and that secret was of inferior importance to this, and yet here he does not give a positive refusal. If he did that, no doubt she would continue to annoy him with her solicita-

DELILAH AND SAMSON

tions, so he amuses her with one explanation and another which might have satisfied the curiosity of an ordinary woman; but the tests which were immediately tried show that he had not yet revealed the genuine secret.

He tells her to bind him with seven green withes which had never been used, and he would be as weak as other men. The statement was not true and we shall not undertake to vindicate his veracity. The obtuseness of conscience which makes a man insensible to the guilt of one species of sin, may also make him reckless of another. These were ropes made of vegetable material, the tough fibers of trees, pliable twisted rods, oziers, hazels, and the like. While these ropes were green, they were very strong. They are used to-day in India in binding the legs of wild elephants and buffaloes that are newly caught. The faithless woman bound him with these, possibly while he slept. She then roused him with the words, "The Philistines be upon thee, Samson." It was no vain alarm. They were in an adjoining room, and no doubt had the withes held him, would have rushed in on some preconcerted signal. He sprang up and rent the green withes as if they had been but tow. The liers-in-wait in the adjoining chamber did not appear, so the dalliance could go on.

The next time may have been on another occasion when he told her that newly twisted or spun ropes that had never been used upon any other would hold him. The result in this case was the same as before. On the third occasion he approached more dangerously near to his great secret. He is tampering with temptation and in the end will yield. The only safety for any man, for the strongest of men, is to avoid the very appearance of evil. In those days there were small looms in which women wove their household stuff, and even women of Delilah's character practiced this industry. Such a loom may have been in her own room where she was accustomed to weave her own clothing. Pictures of these looms are shown on Egyptian sculptures, and as they are still found in many places are simple and comparatively light and not so heavy as the more cumbersome apparatus of our own hand-loom weaver. He suggests to her that if his long locks were woven in with the web, he would be as other men. The woman did this, and to make it more certain, she fastened the web, with

the hair thus woven into it, with a strong pin or nail to either the floor or the wall. When the alarm was given as heretofore, he arose and went forth, dragging the frame, the web, and the pin, the whole apparatus, after him by his hair.

At length, worn out by her importunity, "he told her all his heart." Alas, alas, that this strong man should so soon become so weak! "So perfectly captivated and intoxicated had he become, notwithstanding repeated warnings, 'like the silly dove, without heart' he rushed upon his ruin. Had he not been completely infatuated, he would have seen before, that no alternative remained to him but to break away at once and at all hazards from the enchantress, and quit the field where it was so evident he could not keep his ground. But no charms are stronger than those woven by illicit love, and with him who becomes their prisoner, reputation, life, usefulness, yea, even God's glory and the salvation of the soul are put to peril in obedience to its unhallowed dictates." Says Bishop Hall: "We wonder that a man could possibly be so sottish, and yet we ourselves by temptation become no less insensate. Sinful pleasures like a common Delilah lodge in our bosoms; we know they aim at nothing but the death of our soul; we will yield to them and die. Every willing sinner is a Samson; let us not inveigh against his senselessness, but our own; nothing is so gross and unreasonable to a well disposed mind which temptation will not represent fit and plausible."

He tells her that he has been a "Nazarite unto God" from the very beginning of his existence. What a confession to be made to a woman of lewd character, who, like others of her class, is betraying for money! It would seem as if the utterance of such a statement, betraying such a glaring inconsistency between his profession and his conduct, should have awakened him from the spell that was upon him and made him break away. To take off his hair would cut him off from that consecrated condition. He would then be no stronger than any other man with such muscles as he had. This wicked woman sees the first opportunity to put him to the test. She was so sure this time that he had told her the truth, that before she makes the test, the lords of the Philistines hurry down to her with the money for which she had sold Samson into

their hands. It looks as if they were about to give up the contest, but she says, "Come up *this once,* for he has showed me all his heart."

She causes him to sleep upon her knees and so compliments him for his confidence. When fast asleep, a man is introduced who skillfully, so as not to awaken him, deprives him of his invaluable locks. His strength thereby passed from him. There was no mighty struggle to show what he had lost. He slept on unconscious that he had become as weak as others. Once more the signal is given and the Philistines are upon him in earnest. He did not know that the Lord had left him, but he soon realized his true condition.

"Even as a dove whose wings are cleft for flying
Flutters her idle stumps, and still relying
Upon her wanted refuge, strives in vain
To quit her life from danger, and attain
The freedom of her air-dividing plumes;
She struggles often, and she oft presumes
To take the sanctuary of the open fields;
But finding that her hopes are vain, she yields;
Even so poor Samson."

What a change has come over the man! He is on his way to the very Gaza whose gates not long since he had triumphantly carried off. The arms which yesterday broke in pieces the green cords which held the limbs of an elephant, are bound with feebler cords which they have not the strength to resist. The man who with a jawbone had slain a thousand men and terrified a whole army, is now led along by an ignominious escort. His glorious locks, the symbol of his strength and covenant with God, are left behind, transfixed in the earth, and the head they once covered is exposed to the burning rays of an Eastern sun. Before they started with him, they put out the light of those eyes, which had so often struck terror into their souls. This would help to prevent his escape from them, and if he did escape, would cripple his activity. Possibly they had no good prison in which to keep him, and by putting out his eyes and preserving his life they would, by these indignities and insults, prolong his sufferings. So the once strong Samson, now helpless, bowed down, and blind, enters Gaza.

He was bound with chains that he should not escape. He was not simply to be kept as a captive, but was to be treated as a slave. He was to be a public slave—one of the worst conditions into which a man could be brought. He was put to grinding corn in the prison house. The millstones were worked by hand, this being still the usual method of grinding in the East. This was the work performed by females, and was therefore well suited to disgrace a man of such strength as Samson had shown. Thus the champion and avenger of Israel is now become, through his own folly and wickedness, the drudge and the sport of the Philistines.

"Why was my breeding ordered and prescribed
As of a person separate to God,
Designed for great exploits, if I must die
Betrayed, captived, and both my eyes put out,
Made of my enemies the scorn and gaze,
To grind in brazen fetters under task
With this heaven-gifted strength? O glorious strength,
Put to the labor of the beast, debased
Lower than bond-slave! promise was, that I
Should Israel from Philistian yoke deliver;
Ask for this great deliverer now, and find him
Eyeless in Gaza at the mill with slaves,
Himself in bonds under Philistian yoke.
. . . . . .
O impotence of mind, in body strong!"

Whether Delilah visited Samson while in prison or not, the inspired record does not state. Milton, who treats her as a wife, represents her in his poem as repenting of her course against her husband and visiting him in prison to implore his forgiveness. When he learns of her presence and purpose, he cries out:

"Out; out, hyæna; these are thy wonted arts,
And arts of every woman false like thee,
To break all faith, all vows, deceive, betray,
Then as repentant to submit, beseech,
And reconcilement move with feigned remorse,
Confess, and promise wonders in her change."

In response to this she urges her weakness and that of her sex, saying:

"Nor shouldst thou have trusted that to woman's frailty;
Ere I to thee, thou to thyself was cruel."

Samson thus answers:

"How cunningly the sorceress displays
Her own transgressions to upbraid me mine;
. . . . Weakness is thy excuse,
And I believe it; weakness to resist
Philistian gold; if weakness may excuse,
What murderer, what traitor, parricide,
Incestuous, sacrilegious, but may plead it?
All wickedness is weakness."

She denies that it was love of gold that influenced her, but love of country:

". . . . Thou knowest, the magistrates
And princes of my country came in person,
Solicited, commanded, threatened, urged,
Adjured by all the bonds of civil duty
And of religion, pressed how just it was,
How honorable, how glorious, to entrap
A common enemy, who had destroyed
Such numbers of our nation; and the priest
Was not behind, but ever at my ear,
Preaching how meritorious with the gods
It would be to ensnare an irreligious
Dishonor of Dagan; what had I
To oppose against such powerful arguments?"

If he will forgive her, she will intercede for him with her countrymen, and she has no doubt they will listen to her; but to all this he replies:

"No, no; of my condition take no care;
It fits not; thou and I long since are twain;
Nor think me so unwary or accursed
To bring my feet again into the snare
Where once I have been caught;
I know thy trains,
Though dearly to my cost, thy gins and toils,
Thy fair and chanted cup and warbling charms
No more on me have power."

He is implacable and "more deaf to prayers than winds and seas." If he will not forgive her, she will at least have the consolation of being held in grateful esteem by posterity, as a lover of her country:

"My name perhaps among the circumcised
In Dan, in Juda, and the bordering tribes,
To all posterity may stand defamed,
With malediction mentioned, and the blot
Of falsehood most unconjugal traduced;
But in my country where I most desire,
In Eeron, Gaza, then Ashdod, and in Gath,
I shall be named among the famousest
Of women, sung at solemn festivals,
Living and dead recorded, who, to save
Her country from a fierce destroyer, chose
Above the faith of wedlock bands; my tomb
With odors visited and annual flowers;
Not less renowned than in Mount Ephraim
Jael, who with inhospitable guile,
Smote Sisera sleeping, through the temples nailed."

In his captivity his hair began to grow again as might be expected. This implies that his "strength came with it and came, no doubt, as a result of his repentance. The loss of his hair deprived him of strength simply because it took him out of the condition of a Nazarite with which his strength was connected. It was not because his hair grew, but because of his repentance that God was willing to accept the renewal of his vow and reinvest him with the powers which before he had lost." Says Bishop Hall: "His hair grew together with his repentance and his strength with his hair. . . . It is better for Samson to be blind in prison than to abuse his eyes in Sorek; yea, I may safely say he was more blind when he saw licentiously than now when he sees not; he was a greater slave when he served his affections than now in grinding for the Philistines. The loss of his eyes shows him his sin, neither could he see how ill he had done till he saw not."

After months had passed away, giving Samson's hair time to grow, the Philistines proposed a feast to Dagon, their god, in the belief that he had delivered Samson, their great enemy, into their hands. They came from all parts on this remarkable occasion, and the importance which they attached to the fact that he was their prisoner, is shown in the statement that they "praised their god." Samson's heart must have smote him when he saw that the Lord had been dishonored by his misconduct and that the Philistines ascribed their success to their god. Things have taken a strange turn. "It was no longer a matter between Samson and the Philistines, but between Dagon and Jehovah." While there was much

feasting and merriment in connection with this thanksgiving occasion, some one said, "Call for Samson." They intended, no doubt, that by his presence he would become a laughingstock for them, a butt for their scoff, mockeries and insults. He may have been required to exhibit some feats of his strength for their amusement. Athletic sports were no uncommon thing among the ancients. But their sport was soon ended.

He was brought from the prison house and taken into the inclosed area of a palace building, the roofs and galleries of which were thronged with people of the highest social rank, for "all the lords of the Philistines were there," and in addition thereto about three thousand men and women were present. No doubt he had been thinking how with his growing strength he might in some way redeem the past by striking a blow against Dagon and in favor of Jehovah. His own personal sufferings were now forgotten in his zeal for the God whom he had so shamefully dishonored.

"Happen what may, of me expect to hear
Nothing dishonorable, impure, unworthy
Our God, our law, my nation, or myself;
The last of me or no, I cannot warrant."

With a prayer to God to strengthen him for what he has in mind, he enters the palace. Milton thus describes the scene:

"At sight of him, the people with a shout
Rifted the air, clamouring their god with praise,
Who had made their dreadful enemy their thrall.
He, patient, but undaunted, where they led him,
Came to the place; and what was set before him,
Which without help of eye might be assay'd,
To heave, pull, draw, or break, he still performed
All with incredible, stupendous force,
None daring to appear antagonist.
At length for intermission sake they led him
Between the pillars; he his guide requested
(For so from such as nearer stood we heard)
As over-tired to let him lean awhile
With both his arms on those two massive pillars,
That to the archèd roof gave main support.
He, unsuspicious, led him; which when Samson
Felt in his arms, with head awhile inclined,
And eyes fast fixed he stood, as one who prayed,
Or some great matter in his mind revolved;
At last with head erect thus cried aloud:

'Hitherto, lords, what your commands imposed
I have performed, as reason was, obeying,
Not without wonder or delight beheld;
Now of mine own accord such other trial
I mean to show you of my strength, yet greater
As with amaze shall strike all who behold.'
This uttered, straining all his nerves he bowed;
As with the force of winds and waters pent,
When mountains tremble, those two massive pillars
With horrible convulsion to enthrow
He tugged, he shook, till down they came, and drew
The whole roof after them, with burst of thunder
Upon the heads of all who sat beneath,
Lords, ladies, captains, counselors, or priests,
Their choice nobility and flower, not only
Of this, but each Philistian city 'round,
Met from all parts to solemnize this feast.
Samson, with these inmix'd, inevitably
Pulled down the same destruction on himself;
The vulgar only 'scaped who stood without."

He was willing to die with the Philistines if thereby his God should be honored. The sacred historian tells us, "The dead he slew at his death were more than they which he slew in his life." His body was selected from the heaps of the slain, brought to his own country, and interred in the sepulcher of his fathers. The catastrophe was so overwhelming that no attempt was made to hinder Samson's relations from taking away his dead body. Milton makes his father, when he hears of the manner of his death, speak as follows:

"Nothing is here for tears, nothing to wail
Or knock the breast; no weakness, no contempt,
Dispraise, or blame; nothing but well and fair,
And what may quiet us in a death so noble.
Let us go find the body where it lies
Soaked in his enemies' blood; and from the stream
With lavers pure and cleansing herbs, wash off
The clotted gore. I, with what speed the while,
(Gaza is not in plight to say us nay)
Will send for all my kindred, all my friends,
To fetch him hence, and solemnly attend
With silent obsequy and funeral train
Home to his father's house; there will I build him
A monument, and plant it 'round with shade
Of laurel ever green and branching palm
With all his trophies hung, and acts enrolled
In copious legend or sweet lyric song."

"Whether Delilah was in the mighty structure when Samson was the sport of his captors, we cannot tell. She may have stood sad and silent with remorse and remembered kindnesses she would share no more; while leaning mournfully between the massive pillars which he grasped with extended arms, he bowed his sightless head and prayed for the return of his forfeited power, that he might avenge his own and the enemies of God. It is in accordance with God's retributive justice on former occasions to believe she was there; and when, in answer to that piteous cry of a penitent spirit, the tall columns reeled before his recovered strength, like interlocking masts in a wrathful deep, and the walls heaved and fell in with a descending roof, *hers* was the first shriek that went up from that vast tomb of living throngs, whose music and mirth were drowned in a wail of agony and groans of the death struggle."

"Samson, victorious, all powerful, carrying the gates of Gaza on his back, the hope of his countrymen and the terror of his enemies; and Samson, shorn, degraded, bound, eyeless, grinding in the prison-house of those he might have subdued—such was the lesson given to the Jews of the power of the evil woman. And the story which has repeated itself from age to age, is repeating itself to-day. There are women on whose knees men sleep, to awaken shorn of manliness, to be seized, bound, blinded, and made to grind in unmanly servitude forever."

"She hath cast down many wounded,
Yea, many strong men hath she slain;
Her house is the way to hell,
Going down to the chambers of death."

The Witch of Endor==
an Ancient Spiritualist

"And here Saul is, on the night of imminent and terrible destiny to himself and his people, ten miles away from his great army, in a den of a sorceress, asking to be made the dupe of the vilest imposture. He might have had Omniscience for his guide and the strength of the Almighty for his shield; and he seeks light from a confederate of the prince of darkness; he craves a more intimate alliance with the powers that have already brought him to the very brink of destruction. The hours of the night are swiftly passing, and when the dawn appears the hills will shake with the battle-cry and the thundering charge of a half million warriors; and the consecrated king of Israel, who should rule the destinies of that day in the name of Jehovah, is away from the camp wasting his strength and unnerving his heart by consulting with this wicked and worthless woman at Endor.

"To such dreadful darkness and delusion are even great and strong and princely men given up, when they turn away from the only living and true God and trust in lying vanities. If you would meet the great battle of life with the courage of heroes and the faith of martyrs, do not ask council of those who pretend to be wise above what is written in God's revealed Word. Do no turn away from the instructions and admonitions of holy men, who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. Do not put yourself under the guidance of men and women whose wisdom is of earth and whose inspiration is from beneath."

—Dr. Daniel March, in "Night Scenes in the Bible."

The Witch of Endor—an Ancient Spiritualist

THE history of Saul, the first king of Israel, from the beginning to the end, seems like an inspired tragedy. His character appears to be made up of the most different qualities. "He had the courage of a hero and the timidity of a coward. He spared his worst enemy and would have put to death his best friend. He prophesied himself, and he destroyed the prophets of the Lord. He cut off the diviners and necromancers out of the land, and on the last night of his life he traveled ten miles in great peril and fatigue and distress of mind to inquire for himself of a woman that had a familiar spirit."

This Saul, who was a man of magnificent presence, had been anointed by Samuel as the first king over Israel. He was somewhat headstrong by nature, and had fallen into one sin after another until he had almost made a wreck of himself. The murder of the Lord's priests was on his soul. He had spared Amelek whom the Lord commanded him to destroy, and because of this disobedience the kingdom was not allowed to remain in his family. David, who had been anointed to succeed him, was fast growing into prominence. The hosts of the Philistines, the ancient foes of Israel, were in battle array against him, and he was not in good condition to attack them; he was encamped by the spring where Gideon's band had hastily drank, and with the three hundred thousand men, entrenched on heights that the Philistines could not reach, he should have been strong for the battle, but in fact he seemed dispirited and defenseless.

There was a reason for all of this. The tribes on the east had renounced all allegiance to him. Even his own Benjamin and the strong Judah were growing weary of him. More and more the people were turning to David, who by his bravery and skill was winning the hearts of all. In other days Saul could inquire of the prophet Samuel, but he was now dead and his last words to him

were not very encouraging. "When Saul inquired of the Lord, the Lord answered him not, neither by dreams nor by Urim, nor the prophets." He was at the head of a magnificent army, but after all "he was afraid and his heart greatly trembled."

"There is no path so dark and desolate for human feet to tread as that chosen by the man who resists and grieves away all holy influences from his heart until he feels that God has given him up. The worst thing that can ever happen to a willful and disobedient man like Saul is for God to let him have his own way. It is the darkest hour of life and the beginning of the shadow of death to such a man, when he is left to follow the bent of his own blind passion and to fall into the pit which his own folly has digged."

The poor man does not know which way to turn, and the result is he turns the wrong way. He says to his servants, "Seek me a woman that hath a familiar spirit, that I may go to her, and enquire of her. And his servants said to him, Behold, there is a woman that hath a familiar spirit at Endor." All such practices had been forbidden by the law, and Saul had been very vigilant in enforcing the law, so that it was not known that there were any wizards or necromancers in the land. How could he, with any sort of consistency, consult such a person, and yet if not she, whom should he consult?

And what did he want with this woman? He desired once more to communicate with Samuel, to learn if there were not some way whereby the divine judgment could be turned aside. Samuel had been a judge in Israel for many years. He was also a prophet of the Lord and a man above reproach. When the people desired a king so they could be like the nations about them, Samuel greatly regretted this step, but the Lord authorized him to anoint Saul, and while he lived he was present to reprove or restrain Saul as might be necessary. He died at the age of ninety-nine years. Before his death he assembled the people, to whom he made a farewell address and recounted how faithfully he had tried to live among them. The people responded to this address by saying, "Thou hast not defrauded us, nor oppressed us, neither hast thou taken aught of any man's hand." He was buried at Ramah and the people made great lamentation over him. When Samuel spake to the king for the last time before his death, he

said, "Thou hast done foolishly. Thou hast not kept the commandments of the Lord thy God. Thou hast rebelled and rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft; therefore, because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, therefore he hath rejected thee." No doubt these words are still ringing in the ears of the king and are one of the chief sources that trouble him at this time.

He will make one more effort to see Samuel if possible. It will not do for him to appear as the king, for he will be detected and his visit will be fruitless. He lays aside his buckler and his spear, and, taking off his royal robes, puts on those of common peasants; and with two men whom he can trust he slips away from his camp. They pass down the sides of Gilboa and cross Little Hermon, watching every moment that they may not fall into the hands of the enemy. Having traveled ten or more miles, they come to a cluster of mud and stone cabins on the north side of Little Hermon. In one of the caverns under this mountain they find a solitary hag, who during these times of trouble, when Saul was scouring the land for witches, had hidden herself away that she might, with greater security and for the sake of illgotten gain, practice her imposture of divination.

In due time after miles of travel, with troubled heart, he finds the witch's den. He asks her to bring up whom he shall name to her. Possibly his distinguished stature, which could not well be disguised and which was known to all Israel, may have disclosed him to this woman. She refuses to listen to his proposal, alleging her fear that it may come to the knowledge of the king. Saul pledged by oath that no harm should come to her, and as he was a stranger, it is not easy to see how this oath would be any protection to her except as she believed her visitor to be the king himself. She made no betrayal of herself, however, but asked whom she was to bring up.

Scarcely had the name of Samuel passed the king's lips before, to the amazement of the woman, Samuel appeared. With a loud shriek, as if she saw more than she expected to see, she exclaimed, "Why hast thou deceived me? for thou art Saul." The king was the man who had been vigorously seeking those who had familiar spirits, and the woman possibly feared for her life. He was in no condition now to continue such a warfare, so he assured her she

should not be hurt and earnestly inquired, "What sawest thou?" She answered, "I saw gods ascending out of the earth." It was evident that whatever was seen was seen by the woman herself and not by Saul, for he inquires, "What form is he of?" The woman answered, "An old man cometh up; and he is covered with a mantle." "Saul perceived that it was Samuel, and he stooped with his face to the ground." Whether he really saw him, or whether he supposed it to be Samuel from the woman's description, is a disputed question. The following conversation then ensues between the spirit and Saul: Samuel—"Why hast thou disquieted me to bring me up?" Saul—"I am sore distressed; for the Philistines make war against me, and God is departed from me, and answereth me no more, neither by prophets, nor by dreams: therefore I have called thee, that thou mayest make known unto me what I shall do." Samuel—"Wherefore then dost thou ask of me, seeing the Lord is departed from thee, and is become thine enemy? . . . for the Lord hath rent the kingdom out of thine hand, and given it to thy neighbor, even to David: because thou obeyedst not the voice of the Lord, nor executedst his fierce wrath upon Amelek, therefore hath the Lord done this thing unto thee this day. Moreover the Lord will also deliver Israel with thee into the hands of the Philistines: and to-morrow shalt thou and thy sons be with me: the Lord also shall deliver the host of Israel into the hand of the Philistines."

At the close of this dreadful communication, the king fell down through physical exhaustion and mental distress, for he had "eaten no bread all the day or all the night." He realizes that all is lost. At the urgent solicitation of the woman and his servants, some nourishment was forced upon him, and he departed ere the morning dawned, with sad heart, to meet his coming doom. On the following day, the armies meet in deadly combat. Saul's army is defeated and the Philistines are victorious. The mountains of Gilboa, where the king had his headquarters, are covered with the slain. The breeze is laden with the wails of the dying, and the air is rent with shouts of the victorious foe. As he beholds his still surviving soldiers, he stretches his manly form to its utmost height and, according to the conception of the poet, addresses them as follows:

"Away, away, degenerate Hebrews, fly
From Saul nor see your monarch die;
The hateful phantom vainly now implored
Unarmed my spirit and unedged my sword;
Else fled not Saul before the haughty foe,
Nor on his back received the Gentile blow;
Haste, slave, strike, strike, the victor shall not say
The chief of Israel was a living prey;
Strike the sharp weapon through my mangled breast,
One deep wound more be added to the rest.
Coward; this is the day, this is the hour,
Saul not out-lives his glory and his power."

When his armor-bearer would not take the life of his own king, Saul drew his own sword and fell upon it, and so he died. Encased in royal armor, that magnificent form lay helpless on the ground, its owner having taken his own life rather than to fall into the hands of his enemies. Over his sad fate David lamented in the following eulogy: "How are the mighty fallen! Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon; lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph. Ye mountains of Gilboa, let there be no dew, neither let there be rain upon you, nor fields of offerings: for there the shield of the mighty is vilely cast away, the shield of Saul, as though he had not been anointed with oil."

Some think that our own Shakespeare must have found in this story the foundation for his immortal tragedy of *Macbeth*. They infer this from the parallels running between the two accounts. "Both the king of Israel and Macbeth arose from low station. There was a time when neither of them ever dreamed of royalty. Both were men of mark, were warriors, but treacherous and cruel. Both were murderers of their own guests: Saul in purpose was guilty of the murder of his guest David; Macbeth in deed, for he imbrued his hands in the blood of Duncan. Both were the cause of other murders: Saul bade Doeg kill eighty-five priests; Macbeth hired a villain to waylay and slay Banquo. Both hunted the innocent and slew them because of jealous revenge: Macbeth slew the helpless wife and children of Macduff; Saul hunted like a bloodhound Abiather for favoring David. Both sought to cement their tottering thrones by blood. Both had evil spirits, the one in his own soul, the other in the form of an ambitious, murderous wife. Both came into desperate straits. Both were pressed

by armed foes. Both were abandoned by men and God. Both, in their dire extremity, resorted to witches: Saul, at gloomy Endor; Macbeth, on the blasted heath, amid thunder and lightning, met the unearthly hags, 'black spirits and white, red spirits and grey.' Both died unnatural and tragical deaths by means of the same weapon—the sword. The heads of both were cut off as trophies: the injured Macduff bore in triumph the ghastly head of Macbeth; and the Philistines, the day after the battle, cut off Saul's head and put it on the walls of Bethshean."

In many ancient nations there were jugglers who professed to be able, by some species of incantation, to call up the dead from the underworld, to consult them on the events of the present or the mysteries of the future. No doubt this same practice found an entrance among the Israelites, especially when idolaters were on the throne. This special phase of the so-called occult arts is commonly termed *necromancy*. It is not necessary that the dead should appear in person, but they may communicate by sounds, raps, writing, or some similar manifestations. In some respects these phenomena are akin to the so-called spiritualistic phenomena of our day. The children of Israel were early and persistently cautioned against these evil influences. In Leviticus 19:31, it says, "Regard not them that have familiar spirits." "A man or a woman that hath a familiar spirit shall surely be put to death." "When thou art come into the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations. There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer. For all that do these things are an abomination unto the Lord: and because of these abominations the Lord thy God doth drive them out from before thee" (Deuteronomy 18:9-12). "The soul that turneth away after such as have familiar spirits, I will set my face against that soul, and will cast him off from his people" (Leviticus 20:6). Isaiah complains of the people in his day who "seek unto them that have familiar spirits and unto wizards that peep and that mutter" (Isaiah 8:19).

The whole Bible record shows that there were persons, mostly women, who claimed that they were attended by an invisible spirit

SAUL AND THE WITCH OF ENDOR

that was subject to their call, and inspired them when they sought his direction. They could call up the spirits of the dead, who were invisible to the living, and they would give information concerning things which ordinary mortals could not see. In some places they are called by a term which is equivalent to our ventriloquist, and it is "highly probable that the secret of the art of the soothsayers consisted very much in being able to throw the voice with various modifications into different places, so that it would seem to come from a grave, or from an image of a dead person that was made to appear at the proper time." To make some atonement for his disobedience in other respects, Saul may have rigidly executed the law on those who practiced necromancy and divination. This witch at Endor had, by some means, escaped his vigilance, and now, deprived of all other means of consulting the divine will, and blinded by the superstitions which more or less marked his whole career, he resorts to her who, thus far, had escaped his persecutions.

There have been and are yet various interpretations of this story. One theory, and that which seems to lie on the face of the narrative, is that *Samuel really was made to appear.* The two servants who were with Saul seemed to have been the only parties besides Saul and the witch. If the account of the story came from them, they would surely leave the impression of a natural appearance. The record gives an account of what seems to have occurred without any explanation or philosophy concerning it. Kitto says: "There could be no doubt that this was Samuel, and the king, looking closely at the place to which the woman's fixed regards were turned, discerned the figure she described. It has been thought and we once thought so, that the king did not see the shade but merely judged it was Samuel from the woman's description; but on looking more closely at the text, it becomes more emphatic than it first appears. It is really stated that 'Saul perceived [knew, or assured himself] that it was Samuel himself.' This is not what the woman saw, but what Saul saw. The narrative all along says it was Samuel, which is better authority for the fact than the assertion of the woman or the impression of Saul. Saul might indeed be imposed upon and without much difficulty under the circumstances; but the historian says he was not, that it was Samuel whom he saw, Samuel to whom he spake, Samuel who spake to

him. All the circumstances agree with this and are unaccountable under any other hypothesis."

Another thus disposes of it: Before the woman had time to practice her arts for the deception of the king, behold, at the command of God, Samuel actually appeared. The woman herself had the least expectation of any such a thing. She was so startled and terrified that she cried out with a shriek of horror, and the actual appearance of a living man from the spirit world was too much for her courage and her self-possession. To her it was as great a surprise as it would have been had the stony idols come down from the sides of her cave and spoken with a human voice.

Her magical arts had no power to compel the great prophet to leave the society of Abraham and Moses and appear in that den of sorcery. It was by the power and appointment of the infinite God that Samuel appeared to confound the arts of the sorcerer, and again to rebuke the rebellious king because he had not obeyed the voice of the Lord. It was no semblance or shadow, much less any confederate of the sorceress, any emissary of Satan. It was the same majestic and awful look that Samuel wore when Saul saw him at Ramah for the last time, the same voice which commanded the thunder and the rain in the day of the wheat harvest. The same words of doom came again from the prophet's voice, with the addition that to-morrow all should be fulfilled. The unhappy saw and heard, but no word of penitence or of hope came from his pale and trembling lip;

> "He heard and fell to earth as falls the oak
> At once, and blasted by the thunder stroke."

When he recovered and rose to go back upon the perilous night journey to his army, he went a doubly doomed and despairing man.

On the other hand, it seems a little unusual that, when according to Saul's own statement, "God is departed from me and answereth me no more, neither by prophets nor by dreams," that the Lord should consent to visit him by the very means which had been made illegal, and for the practicing of which the individual was to be put to death. We do not mean to say that God could not and would not bring back his prophets, if a good work should be accomplished by them which could not be reached in any other way. But this apparition, if it really appeared, does not seem to

have brought any new information to Saul. He was told the Lord had departed from him, but this information was not new to him. The Lord would take his kingdom and give it to David, but he had learned this before. He had not properly punished Amelek, but Samuel had previously reminded him of this. He was told that, "To-morrow thou and thy sons should be with me," which, to say the least, was unusual language for Samuel. May not this man have already prepared for suicide, and may he not have resolved that, rather than be defeated, which seemed very probable, and then captured, he will take his own life?

The Lord had no new message for Saul. If he had, this was not the place for such communication. God did use Balaam for a purpose, but it is expressly stated that he was under divine control. There is no reference to any divine interference here. On the contrary, we read pretty plainly between the lines that a sin was committed. The man who turns from God to a sorceress is not likely to receive divine communications. On the contrary, Saul is guilty of additional sin for consulting one whom it was illegal for any one to consult, much more the king of Israel. "So Saul died for his transgression which he committed against the Lord, even against the word of the Lord, which he kept not, and *also for asking counsel of one that had a familiar spirit, to enquire of it*" (I. Chronicles 10:13).

Says Dr. J. M. Buckley: "Before the witch spoke the words attributed to Samuel, Saul had given her all the facts that she needed to form the answers in this full description of his situation and his confession of his helplessness and distress. . . . The answer plainly consists of things which Samuel had said while living, and of things that could be conjectured from the situation. It is not necessary to assume that the woman was wholly a deceiver. Possibly she believed that her incantations brought up the dead, and she may have fallen into a species of trance, in which she imagined the character suggested by her applicant. If so, she would naturally imitate the tone of the supposed responder, and would speak to a great degree in harmony with what the character might be expected to say under the known circumstances. The narrator, as certain ancient church decrees (according to Reginald Scott) declare, 'set foorth Saule's mind and Samuel's estate and

certine things which were said and scene, ommitting whether they were true or false.' "*

"The Israelites came from a people surrounded by idolatry and addicted to sorcery. They appear to have believed for a long time in the reality of the gods of the heathen, considering them inferior, however, to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and were continually lapsing from the true faith into paganism and sorcery. During the hundreds of years that Jacob's descendants were in Egypt, their faith was greatly corrupted; when Moses tarried long in the mount, they compelled Aaron to make a golden image to represent God. Surrounded by the Egyptians and in the midst of the Canaanites, who were not wholly driven out for centuries, their king and many of their people frequently relapsed into witchcraft and idolatry. . . . An examination of the references to witchcraft shows that only the existence and criminality of the attempt to practice it are to be concluded from the words of the Scriptures. . . . The laws of Moses and the maledictions of the prophets show an attempt to prohibit, punish, and extirpate the whole host of occult practices of Egypt, Babylon, Media, Persia, Phœnicia, and every other nation with which the Israelites came in contact. The theocratic nature of the government of God as set forth by Moses could not allow any rival; the attempt was rebellion and treason, the punishment death."

Another explanation of this and similar phenomena produced by these people is "the capability of putting their minds at will in such a connection with the minds of those who consulted them that they knew what was passing in their minds. This power, possessed by persons of a certain nervous temperament, can be traced through all the records of the past. We call it animal magnetism, clairvoyance, the nervous principle, or psychology. It is demonstrated now beyond a doubt that, by mysterious but purely natural influences, a person of a certain organization can be placed at will in such connection with another similarly organized, that the mind of the latter will be opened to that of the former; the former will feel, see, and know just what the latter sees and knows." The following is an example: Eliot Warburton, in his book entitled

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*Buckley's "Faith Healing etc.," p. 223.

The Crescent and a Cross, tells us that at Cairo he engaged a magician to visit him. "A boy was called in and was made to look intently into his own hand; the magician gazed at him fixedly, working himself up into great excitement; at last he told Warburton that any one he asked for would appear. He asked for Henry Hardinge; the boy said, 'He is here,' and described him correctly as a little man in a black dress, white cravat, gray hair, and having but one leg; all of which was true. Others were called and appeared to the boy who had been placed in psychological connection with Warburton by the magician, so that what he saw was in the consulter's mind."

Zschokke, a German writer, in his autobiography, speaks of something which he called his inward sight and which he did not himself understand. He gives this example which we have abridged, giving the substance thereof: "One day, in the city of Waldshut, I entered an inn in company with two young student foresters. We supped at a place where the guests were making merry with Mesmer's magnetism, Lavator's physiognomy, and such like. One of my companions, whose national pride was wounded by their mockery, begged me to make some reply, particularly to a handsome young man who sat opposite to us, and who had allowed himself extraordinary license. This man's former life was at that moment presented to my mind. I turned to him and asked whether he would answer me candidly if I related to him some of the most secret passages of his life, I knowing as little of him personally as he did of me. He promised if I was correct in my information to admit it frankly. I then related what my vision had shown me; and the whole company were made acquainted with the private history of the young merchant, his school years, his youthful errors, and lastly, with a fault committed in reference to the strong box of his principal; I described to him the uninhabited room with whitened walls, where, to the right of a brown door, on a table, stood a black money box; and a dead silence prevailed during the whole narration, which I alone occasionally interrupted by inquiring whether I spoke the truth. The startled young man confirmed every particular and even what I had scarcely expected, the last mentioned. Touched by his candor, I shook hands with him over the table and said no more. He

asked my name, which I gave him, and we remained talking till past midnight. He is probably still living."

The Spiritualists, of course, claim that the case of Samuel is a genuine revelation, exactly in keeping with what they are having to-day. We believe that these so-called manifestations may be accounted for on the same ground. Some of them are mistakes; others the result of fraud; others still the result of hypnotic and mesmeric influences, which are undeveloped psychic forces, which have nothing to do with the world of spirits. Says one: "Many of its marvels are now known to be mere tricks of persons interested in making money. It is generally admitted, however, that there are others which cannot be explained in this convenient way; and it must remain, for the present, an open question whether spiritualism does not present to us, on a broad scale, a revival of demonism. That many of its spirits, whether they are in the flesh or without, are 'unclean spirits,' is abundantly proved by the antipathy, manifested in its 'messages,' to our holy religion, and by the disastrous moral results to which it leads many of its devotees. . . . The supposition of demoniac agency is the most natural that we can entertain. If the intelligence appears to be weak and foolish as it is wicked, this is but another respect in which it resembles the demons of the New Testament whose mental power is always of a low kind."*

The Seybert Commission, a scientific body appointed to make investigations concerning the reality of spiritualistic phenomena, speaks thus of Dr. Henry Slade, a slate writer: "With this medium we had a number of sittings, and however wonderful may have been the manifestations of his mediumship in the past or elsewhere, we were forced to the conclusion that the character of those *which passed under our observation were fraudulent throughout.* There was really no need of any elaborate method of investigation; close observation was always required."

"The difficulty attending this mode of spiritualistic manifestation [spirit rappings] is increased by the fact, familiar to physiologists, that sounds of varying intensity may be produced in almost any portion of the human body by voluntary muscular action. To determine the exact location of this muscular activity, is at times

*"Psychic Studies," p. 63.

a matter of delicacy. What we can say, thus far, with assurance is that in the cases which have come under our observation, the theory of the purely physiological origin of the sounds has been sustained by the fact that the mediums were invariably and confessedly cognizant of the rappings wherever they occurred, and could at once detect any spurious rappings, however exact and undistinguishable to other ears might be the 'imitation.' "*

Dr. P. B. Randolph, who for many years was a lecturer and a medium, delivered a discourse in Clinton Hall, N. Y., which was afterwards published in the *Tribune,* in which he says: "I was a medium about eight years, during which time I made three thousand speeches and traveled over several different countries proclaiming the new gospel. . . . Experience has taught me that sixty-five per cent. of the medical clairvoyants are arrant knaves, humbugs, and catch-penny impostures; thirty-three per cent, are refined, sympathetic, nerval persons who arrive at an approximately true diagnosis by sympathy; such are not clairvoyants, of course. And five per cent. of the whole are really what they claim to be in various degrees of perfection. . . . I am personally acquainted with three hundred and forty-one professed medical clairvoyants, and of these there are seven actual seers who will stand a testing; and of these only one in America. . . . The result of my observation is that, if one-half dozen sounds out of every *five thousand* that pass for spiritual be genuine—that is, not made by the medium's foot against the leg of a table, or chair, or by some other jugglery—it is a large percentage. When invisible musicians play pianos in dark rooms, if the hands of the medium be mittened and held by others and the music still goes on, the inference is that they do not produce it. The writing upside down is an art readily obtained after a few weeks' private practice. Matches or a lump of phosphorus make very good imitations of spirit-lights. When spirits in a dark room blow horns and talk through trumpets, if, unknown to the medium a little printer's ink be rubbed on the mouth of the instrument, a beautiful black circle will, when lights are introduced, generally be found adorning the medium's labial appendage. . . . Dark circles are the king humbugs of spiritualism generally. . . . Of speaking

*Seybert Commission, p. 22.

mediums, twenty-five per cent. are, in my opinion, victims of demoniac influence; twenty-five per cent. are deliberate impostures; eight per cent. may be under healthful spiritual influences, such as are to be found in all church history; twenty-five per cent. are honest-hearted men and women, laboring under the world-saving fever, who delude themselves and others by imagining they are under a special influence of some defunct philosopher; and the remaining seventeen per cent. consist of persons who have the power in themselves (although they assign it to the spirits) of inducing at will a dreamy sort of ecstasy or trance, during which they are frequently insensible to physical pain and possess an extraordinary power of mental concentration. This trance can easily be induced."

"There is no possibility of establishing upon our side any intercourse with the dead in the realm of death, or of producing an apparition of those deceased. The realm of death opens only to receive the deceased, not the living; and those who are there are chained and bound by the sentence of God, and the hour is yet to come when also the realm of death must give up its dead, that the final judgment take place. Those, however, who may perhaps be preserved there unto life, await the hour of their divine deliverance. Neither they themselves, nor others, can even for a moment open to them the world on this side the grave."

"With regard, however, to the blessed who are in heaven, the question whether they may come back, even for brief moments, falls to the ground of itself; and that *we* can at least constrain them to do so, is totally out of the question. What they might perhaps be able or wish to do to those whom they have left behind, for that God's angels are better ministers and messengers; and they are not their messengers but God's whose providential care for us here below cannot be excelled by the love of those who have gone before."

The apostle Paul, by divine prophetic insight, tells in his letter to Timothy what shall happen in "the latter times," possibly referring to our own day. "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seered with a hot iron; forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God

had created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth" (I. Timothy 4: 1-3).

Can it be that we are living in the "latter times" referred to here by the Spirit, and that the so-called theories of modern spiritualists are here described? May not the witch of Endor have been a fitting representative of this modern delusion which is wise above what is written, discredits the Scriptures, dishonors God, promotes superstition, and often leads to wickedness, insanity, and death?

Hannah---the Praying Mother

"Blessed are the men who have had praying mothers. The influence of that fact they cannot shake off. They may curse and swear and go to the very boundary of the pit, may go into it, and we doubt whether in all their suffering they can ever shake off the influence of having had a praying mother. The mother's devotion comes up in the boy's veneration, love of right, conscientiousness, magnanimous hope, gentle courage. As with the boy and mother, so with the girl and father. Sex is not a physiological question only; we find the sex element in disposition, in thinking, in quality of strength. Blessed are they who have had a praying ancestry. As for such as have not had praying forefathers, there is no reason why they should be lost and thrown away. God is our Father, and when father and mother forsake us he will take us up. He will lift the beggars from the dunghill, and set them among princes, and make them inherit the throne of glory."

—*Dr. Joseph Parker.*

Hannah—the Praying Mother

THE record of this woman is found in the first chapter of the Book of Samuel and occurred during the closing of the Judges, before the establishment of the monarchy. The tabernacle is located at Shiloh, and the man who was at once judge and high priest is far advanced in years. He seems to have been a man of good character himself, but was divinely reprimanded because of his indulgence to his two sons, who disgraced their father and the priesthood. Eli is not of the regular house of Eleazar, the third son of Aaron, in which the succession should have continued. The transfer to the house of Ithamar continued until its final overthrow in the reign of Solomon. We know nothing of Eli's early years, nor how he came into this position. "Was this effected through some heroic deed of Eli's youth? And did this raise him to the office of high priest or of judge? Such a supposition is rendered probable by the union of warrior and priest in Phinehas; and a like transference of the pontificate from a like cause appears in the only other time of the history when it reaches to a like eminence, when the priestly house of the Maccabees became also the rulers of their countrymen."

Shiloh was one of the earliest and most sacred of the Hebrew sanctuaries. Its location is described in Judges 21 : 19 as a "place which is on the north side of Bethel, on the east side of the highway that goeth up from Bethel to Shechem, and on the south of Lebanon." The ark of the covenant, which had been kept at Gilgal during the progress of the subjugation of the country, was removed thence and kept there from the time of Joshua until the days of Samuel, covering a period probably of four hundred years. "The ruins found there to-day are inconsiderable. They consist chiefly of the remains of a comparatively modern village with which some large stones and fragments of columns are intermixed, evidently from much earlier times. Near a ruined mosque flourishes an immense oak, the branches of which the winds of centuries have swayed. . . . The scenery of Shiloh is not specially attractive. It presents no feature of grandeur or beauty adapted to impress the mind and to awaken thoughts in harmony

with the memories of the place. For the objects to which Shiloh was devoted, it was not unwisely chosen. It was secluded and therefore favorable to acts of worship and religious study in which the youth of scholars and devotees like Samuel was to be spent. Terraces are still visible on the sides of the rocky hills, which show that every foot and inch of soil once teemed with verdure and fertility. The surrounding hills served as an amphitheatre whence the spectators could look and have the entire scene under their eyes. To its other advantages we should add that of its central position for the Hebrews on the west of the Jordan. An air of oppressive stillness now hangs over all the scene and adds force to the reflection that truly the 'oracles' so long consulted there 'are dumb'; they had fulfilled their purpose and given place to a more sure word of prophecy."

The record tells us of a Levite, named Elkanah, of Mount Ephraim. Whether he lived there at the time of which we write, or whether he had originally come from that section, we do not know. There is a well-known Ramah six miles north of Jerusalem. This may have been the locality of their house. Dr. Robinson concludes it was at a place called Sobah, some five miles west of Jerusalem. It is enough to say the place cannot be absolutely identified. It is mentioned here that he had two wives, the first mention of anything of that kind since the days of Jacob, and the results show that it was no more of a pleasure to him than it was to Jacob. A plurality of wives was not absolutely forbidden by the laws of Moses, though the possession of more than one was exceedingly rare except among those in official position. This was permitted at the giving of the law, most likely because the "Eternal's mercy would not interfere with a universal usage which, his wisdom knew, from local customs and long indulged habit, would demand violence to be relinquished. The laws he instituted in no way interfered with those habits of his people which custom had endeared, his prescience leaving to time that improvement and greater refinement of the human race which demands ages to accomplish, but which would at length fling aside of itself every fetter that once had linked it to the customs of less enlightened nations. . . . But though permitted by the Mosaic law, polygamy was so restricted that the protection, happiness,

and well-being of both wives were provided for; no partiality could commit injustice; the man that did so was punishable by law. . . . The laws of Moses relating to conjugal duties provided for one wife alone, thus making the distinction between those customs which were to last forever, through every age and race and clime, and those which were merely nationalized from previous habit and association."

Some Jewish commentators on this case suggest that one of the wives of this man was childless as a punishment for having taken more than one. It is more than probable, however, that Elkanah had taken the second wife because the first bore him no children. Here, as in Jacob's case, the unfortunate wife seems to have been the one most loved. Peninnah, the wife favored with children, seems to have been more annoying than Leah, while Hannah bore her taunts and insinuations much more patiently and with better spirit than did Rachel. Elkanah experienced the truth of the statement of a writer on Persian customs, that "man is to be praised who confines himself to one wife; for if he takes two it is wrong and he will certainly repent of his folly." Thus say the seven wise women:

"Be that man's life immersed in gloom
Who weds more wives than one;
With one his cheeks retain their bloom,
His voice a cheerful tone;
These speak his honest heart at rest
And he and she are always blest.
But when with two he seeks for joy
Together they his soul annoy;
With two no sunbeam of delight
Can make his day of misery bright."

This man was a Levite and, as such, a man in official position, hence under special obligations to keep the law. Three times a year it was the duty of all the male adults to visit the courts of the Lord's house. "That woman was not included by name was, instead of being a proof of her lesser importance and responsibility, a beautiful manifestation of that divine tenderness and justice which in their perfection and prescience God only could display. A nameless variety of causes might intervene to prevent woman's leaving her home in the distant provinces of Judea to accompany her father and husband to Jerusalem. Many a man might be enabled to obey the law himself, who would have been

prevented from doing so had he been under a positive command to bring with him his wife and children."

Nevertheless, when convenient to do so, pious persons often took their wives and children with them. When Joseph went up to Jerusalem, he took with him Mary his wife, and the child Jesus. In his case, however, he had reached the age of twelve years when he was personally under obligations to attend. In this case before us, the whole family went up to this sacred place of worship; for, accompanying Elkanah were both the wives with the children of Peninnah, both sons and daughters. Hannah seems to have been one of those nervous, sensitive natures on whom troubles rest with double weight. The Jewish women considered motherhood a special blessing, and for a woman of such temperament to be childless was the very height of anguish and mortification. To add to this unpleasant condition were the taunts of Peninnah, "her adversary," the other wife, who seemed disposed to vent her illwill and show her contempt for Hannah because she had no children and for years her wish had not been gratified. We are told, "she provoked her sore to make her fret." She could have born these uncalled-for taunts and this wicked treatment more patiently had it occurred in the quiet of their own mountain home; but to find them heard by others on their way to Shiloh, for whose benefit, no doubt, they were uttered, and to have them more pointed when spoken during their stay at Shiloh, no doubt, with a view to mortify her in the presence of others, cut deep into her very soul. She was unjustly ridiculed for that which she could not help, and most likely there were plenty of thoughtless people who were aware of the disgrace attaching to a childless wife and would smile at the sharp speeches of the favored wife which made Hannah's heart to ache. It was a singular spectacle. "There was the loquacious mother surrounded by her children—children afraid to manifest any of the kind attentions which their little hearts might prompt towards one whom their mother hated; and there was Hannah by herself, alone, wanting in all the little charities and kind solicitudes of motherhood, and possessed of no comfort but in God and in the kind attentions of her husband's inalienable love, which indeed enfolded her like a mantle, though it availed little to protect her from the keen shafts of a woman's scurrilous tongue."

On these occasions a part of the worship consisted in presenting some suitable animal for a peace offering; and after it had been slain and the priest had taken the portions allotted to him—the breast and the right shoulder—the remainder was returned to the offerer and he and his friends might partake of it as they wished. This was the usual way he did. On this occasion he gave a portion to Peninnah and her sons and daughters; to Hannah he gave a "worthy portion." Some suppose that he showed his love and esteem for her and his appreciation of her lonely condition, by giving her a double portion; others prefer to consider it a choice and dainty part of the meat. Such attention on the part of her husband would no doubt intensify the cruel actions of her "adversary" and give a new sting to her unkind utterances; and so hurt had she become, as these things had been borne year by year, that at this time she declines to eat what had been so tenderly and lovingly provided for her.

"Hannah was one of the class of women in whom genius and a poetic nature are struggling with a vague intensity, giving the keenest edge to desire and disappointment. All Judean women desire children, but Hannah had that vivid sense of nationality, that identification of self with a sublime future of her people, that made it bitter to be excluded from all share in those hopes and joys of motherhood, from which the earth's deliverer was to spring. She desired a son as poets desire song, as an expression of all that was heroic and unexpressed in herself, and as a tribute to the future glories of her people. A poet stricken with paralysis might suffer as she suffered. But it was a kind and degree of sorrow, the result of an exceptional nature, which few could comprehend. To some it would afford occasion only for vulgar jests. Even her husband, devoted as he was, wondered at, rather than sympathized with her."

Her husband was touched with her afflictions and would do all he could to aid her. There are sorrows and heartaches into whose deepest recesses no earthly friend can come. "Hannah, why weepest thou? and why eatest thou not? and why is thy heart grieved? am not I better to thee than ten sons?" There was no question of his love or of his kind treatment of her, but none the less her heart ached. Some suppose this may indicate that Peninnah had borne him ten sons. It may, however, mean a large

number and is intended to say that the place she had in his heart and the share she had in his affections should bring her as much comfort as many children. It has been hinted at, as a possible help to understand its force, that among the Arabians a woman who gave birth to ten sons was worthy of special honor. In a Bedaween romance we read: "Now it was a custom among the Arabs, that when a woman brought forth ten male children she should be *Moonejeba,* that is, *enrolled,* and for her name to be published among the Arabs and they used to say that such an one is enrolled."

There comes a time to all of us when, in affliction, there is no human power to help and yet we must have a helper. This time has come to this woman and she has one recourse—the same that God's people have always had and in all places, no matter what their troubles might have been. Possibly she may have thought of the words of Moses, "What nation is there that hath their God *so nigh* unto them, as the Lord our God is unto us in all things that we call upon him for?" For just such troubles as these, which no earthly physician can heal, has the great Physician been provided. In the depths of her anguish she resolves to take her complaint to God, make a confidant of him, and ask him for that which above all else she desires. She will do that at the sacred feast of Shiloh, where he is especially located, and where of all other places he will most delight to bless his children. When the meal was over, she went to the tabernacle, where, in "bitterness of soul, she prayed unto the Lord and wept sore." When she had poured out her prayer to God, she vowed a vow that, if the Lord would remember her and bless her with a man child, "then I will give him unto the Lord all the days of his life, and there shall no razor come upon his head." This means he should be a Nazarite for life. In the case of Samson and John the Baptist, this obligation was imposed by the will of God; but in this case it is done freely by the parent before the birth of the child. As a Levite, he would, like all the others of the tribe, be already devoted to the Lord, but the service of the Levites did not begin until the party was thirty years of age. Hannah, no doubt, intended that he should not only be a Nazarite, but be devoted to the Lord from his earliest years.

"As she continued praying before the Lord, Eli marked her mouth. Now Hannah, she spake in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard: therefore Eli thought she

DEDICATION OF SAMUEL

had been drunken." We are not sure whether Eli, who was sitting "upon a seat by a post of the temple of the Lord," was occupying a part of the tabernacle itself, or whether he occupied a seat by a post near the entrance, where he sat both as high priest and judge to give advice in matters of difficulty and to adjust cases that might be brought before him. This is the first case of unuttered prayer that we know of recorded in Scripture. In the East prayers are usually oral, and the conduct of Eli would indicate that this was the case here; otherwise, from seeing this woman's lips move, he would not have hastened to the conclusion that she had taken too much wine at the feast and was therefore drunken. The high priest rebuked her and said, "How long wilt thou be drunken? put away thy wine from thee." What a dreadful blunder this kind-hearted old man made in his reproof! Just as others do daily in seeking to direct natures they cannot comprehend. How this would aggravate her troubles, to find that no one but her husband, not even the high priest, could appreciate her situation, but that reproof and misunderstanding came from every section! We could not have blamed her much had she resented with a little feeling such an insinuation, for which no possible occasion had been given, and which should not have been intimated against a woman without very strong testimony. She bears this with the same meekness with which she had borne other burdens, but vindicates herself and shows that he is mistaken. She says to him, "No, my Lord, I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit: I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but have poured out my soul before the Lord. Count not thine handmaid for a daughter of Belial: for out of the abundance of my complaint and grief have I spoken hitherto." When Eli saw his mistake, he said unto her tenderly, "Go in peace: and the God of Israel grant thee thy petition that thou hast asked of him." And she said to him, "Let thine handmaid find grace in thy sight. So the woman went her way, and did eat, and her countenance was no more sad."

"This experience illustrates that kind of prevailing prayer that comes when the soul, aroused to the full intensity of its being by the pressure of some anguish, pours itself out like a wave into the bosom of its God. The very outgush is a relief; there is healing in the very act of self-abandonment, as the whole soul casts itself on God; and though there be no present fulfillment, yet, in point

of fact, peace and rest come to the spirit. Hannah had no voice of promise, no external sign, only the recorded promise of God to hear prayer; but the prayer brought relief. All the agony of desire had passed. 'Her countenance was no more sad.' She knew that in God's good time she should have the desire of her heart, and she had. They arose in the morning early and returned to their own home in Ramah. In due time, she was made the happy mother of a son, whom she called Samuel, that is, 'asked of God.'"

The following year, when Elkanah was about to go forth to Shiloh again, as was his custom, Hannah declined to go. It was not required of her, and she preferred not to go until the child should be weaned; and then she said, "I will bring him, that he may appear before the Lord, and there abide forever." Just how long she remained away from the Shiloh festivals and when she did go, is not certain. If she did not go until her child was fit for some service in connection with the tabernacle, it would suggest a late weaning. Jewish commentators take the period to have been at least two years and possibly three, but a child of this age even would be too young to be left with strangers so far from home, and especially if expected to be of any service in connection with the employments of the sanctuary. An old writer suggests there was a threefold weaning of children in olden times; the first from their mother's milk when three years of age, the second from the care of the nurse when seven years of age, the third when they became responsible in the sight of the law when twelve years of age. "We incline to the seven years, which is certainly not too early, and twelve years is perhaps too late; for Hannah, when she reappeared at the tabernacle with the child, expected that Eli would speedily call to mind their previous interview, an incident not sufficiently marked, one would think, however important to her, to be remembered after twelve years by one who had, in the meanwhile, been in the habit of seeing numerous people under every variety of circumstance and from all parts of the land. Eli was an old man, and twelve years is but a short space to those who are advanced in life. As our years hasten sadly and pass with rapid wings, the more precious they become to us."

When the time came for her, she went with her husband once more to the place where, years before, she had poured out her

soul unto God. It must have been a glad sight to see that mother, who, at this very same spot years before, had had her heart almost crushed by the gibes and sneers pointed at her because she was childless, now leading her little child to that venerable man, Eli, who had made such a sad blunder in reproving her and who possibly occupied the same seat where he had looked upon her years ago. It seemed almost as though it were but yesterday since she was here. She was sure he would remember that, to her, memorable occasion when her soul went out in agony for help; and she said to him, as though the whole affair was yet fresh in his memory, "Oh, my lord, as thy soul liveth, my lord, I am the woman that stood by thee here, praying unto the Lord. *For this child* I prayed; and the Lord hath given me my petition which I asked of him. Therefore also I have lent him to the Lord; as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the Lord."

Mrs. Hemans pictures the journey made by this Hebrew mother and son in the following lines:

"The rose was rich in bloom on Sharon's plain
When a young mother with her first born thence
Went up to Zion, for the boy was vowed
Unto the temple service; by the hand
She led him and her silent soul the while
Oft, as the dewy laughter of his eye
Met her sweet, serious glance, rejoiced to think
That ought so pure, so beautiful, was hers
To bring before her God. So passed they on
O'er Judah's hills; and wheresoe'er the leaves
Of the broad sycamore made sounds at noon
Like lulling raindrops, or the olive boughs
With their cool dimness crossed the sultry blue
Of Syria's heaven, she paused that he might rest;
Yet from her own meek eyelids chased the sleep
That weighed their dark fringe down, to sit and watch
The crimson deepening o'er his cheeks' repose
As at a red flower's heart; and when a fount
Lay like a twilight star, midst palmy shades
Making its banks green gems along the wild,
Then too she lingered, from the diamond wave
Drawing light waters for his rosy lips
And softly parting clusters of jet curls
To bathe his brow. At last the Fane was reached,
The earth's One Sanctuary; and rapture hushed
Her bosom, as before her, through the day
It rose, a mountain of white marble steeped
In light like floating gold."

When she came to this place she had brought with her "three bullocks and one ephah of flour and a bottle of wine." The bullocks were slain on the altar as a preparation for the ceremony of giving her child to God; the blood representing the blood of the coming High Priest who should give his own life a ransom for many. In this hour of glad triumph, when her prayer had received visible answer, her soul breaks forth like Miriam of old in a song of praise and thanksgiving. It is a remarkable specimen of the early lyric poetry of the Hebrews. It contains the first designation of the Messiah under that name. Many of the ideas and images were repeated afterwards by the mother of Jesus on a similar occasion. It is said that when the allied forces of state and church were combining against Martin Luther and he had to stand almost as one man against a world, he found refuge in the song of this now glad-hearted woman. He printed it as a tract, with suitable comments, and spread it all over Europe. In thousands of hamlets, hearts were beating to the heroic words of this Judean mother:

"My heart rejoiceth in Jehovah,
My horn is exalted in Jehovah;
My speech shall flow out over my enemies,
Because I rejoice in thy salvation.
There is none holy as Jehovah;
For there is none beside thee;
Neither is there any rock like our God.
Talk no more so exceedingly proudly;
Let not arrogance come out of thy mouth;
For Jehovah is the God of knowledge,
By him are actions weighed.
The bows of mighty men are broken,
But the weak are girded with strength.
The rich are hired out for bread;
But the hungry cease from want.
The barren woman hath born seven;
The fruitful one hath grown feeble.
Jehovah killeth and maketh alive;
He bringeth down to the grave and bringeth up.
Jehovah maketh poor and maketh rich;
He bringeth and lifteth up.
He raiseth the poor out of the dust,
He lifteth the beggar from the dunghill,
To set them among princes,
To make them inherit the throne of glory;
For the pillars of the earth are Jehovah's;
He hath set the world upon them.

He will keep the feet of his saints,
The wicked shall be silent in darkness;
For by strength no man shall prevail.
The adversaries of Jehovah shall be broken to pieces;
Out of heaven shall he thunder upon them.
Jehovah shall judge the ends of the earth;
He shall give strength unto his King,
And exalt the horn of his Anointed."

"This song shows the fire, the depth, the fervency of the nature of this woman, capable of rising to the sublimest conceptions. It is the ecstasy of the triumph of conscious weakness in an omnipotent protector. Through her own experience, as it is with every true soul, she passes to the experience of universal humanity; in her Deliverer she sees a deliverer and helper of all the helpless and desolate; and thus, through the gate of personal experience, she comes to a wide sympathy with all who live. She loves her God, not mainly and only for what he is to her, but for what he is to all. How high and splendid were these conceptions and experiences that visited and hallowed the life of the simple and lowly Jewish woman in those rugged and unsettled periods; and what beautiful glimpses do we get of the good and honest-hearted people that lived at that time in Palestine and went up yearly to worship at Shiloh!

"The story goes to show that the condition of married women among the Jews in the time of the Judges was quite free and unrestrained. After they had eaten and drunk in Shiloh, Hannah, without imparting her intentions to her husband, goes unattended to the temple of the Lord. Here she vowed a vow that if a son were given her, she would devote him to the Lord all the days of his life, and no razor should come upon his head. Her going to pray as she did would have excited remark had it not been the common custom of the nation. How could she have devoted her child to God had she not been sure that her husband would abide by her decision? She assumes her right to remain at home till her child is old enough to be left with the priest. It is Hannah who brings the bullocks, flour, and wine, and Hannah who offered them. She addressed Eli, she chanted the song of thanksgiving, and she devoted the child. The husband and father had no more to do with it than the simple acts of acquiescence and approval

which he would not have so unhesitatingly bestowed had he not possessed the most perfect confidence in the judgment and actions of his wife."

The tabernacle of the Lord would seem to be the best place in all the world to leave a child, and yet, under the very shadow of the building, yea, inside of the sacred precincts, influences were at work which might have thoroughly corrupted this lad. Here were the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, priests of the Lord; but while their office was a holy one, their characters were corrupt. The administration of their office was characterized by the most grasping selfishness. The record says, "The sons of Eli were sons of Belial, they knew not the Lord." This is not the language of enemies but of the inspired penman. From that time to the present, it has been possible for men to be in high position, to pronounce holy words, to be clothed in emblematic robes, and yet to be full of corruption and death. "It is possible for a man to have a pulpit and to have no God, to have a Bible and no Holy Ghost, to be employing his lips in uttering the eloquences of truth, when his heart has gone astray from all that is true, beautiful, and good. At the very moment his lips are formed by the words that ought to have converted himself, his heart is not in his work; it is wandering far off yonder, buying and selling and getting gain, sucking in poison when it ought to have extracted honey, and making the Word of God of none effect."

All this had a bad influence on the people. The record says, "The sin of the young men was very great," and as a result, "Men abhorred the offering of the Lord." Their conduct was a matter of public remark and censure. Eli himself heard of their conduct and said to them, "Ye make the Lord's people to transgress." Men should look at God and not at the priest; we should aim to follow Christ and not the church member. After all, it is very hard not to be influenced by men in high official position. As this was a matter of common talk, there is no doubt Hannah knew of it, and, with her thoughtful mind, knew of the danger to which a boy would be subjected by coming in contact with such associations; but she also knew the worth of prayer. She had asked this child of the Lord and had received him. She now gives him back to the service of the sanctuary, with the full faith that her prayers and her teaching, and, above all, the guidance of the Lord,

would keep him in the right way. Her confidence was not a rash one. This very child was the instrument in God's hand to make known the punishment which should come upon these dissolute priests.

The poet, in the following lines, attempts to picture for us the woman's heart as she leaves her boy behind her:

"But when that hour
Waned to the fair moment, when the boy
Lifted through rainbow gleaming tears, his eye
Beseechingly to hers and half in fear
Turned from the white-robed priest and 'round her arm
Clung as the ivy clings—the deep spring tide
Of nature then swelled high and o'er her child
Bending, her soul broke forth in mingled sounds
Of weeping and sad song: 'Alas,' she cried,—

"'Alas, my boy, thy gentle grasp is on me,
The bright tears quiver in thy pleading eyes
And now fond thoughts arise,
And silver cords again to earth have won me;
And like a vine thou claspest my full heart—
How shall I hence depart?

"'How the lone paths retrace where thou wert playing
So late, along the mountains, at my side?
And I in joyous pride
By every place of flowers my course delaying,
Wove, e'en as pearls, the lilies 'round thy hair
Beholding thee so fair.

"'And oh, the home whence thy bright smile hath parted!
Will it not seem as if the sunny day
Turned from its door away,
While through its chambers wandering, weary-hearted,
I languish for thy voice, which past me still
Went like a singing rill?

"'Under the palm trees thou no more shalt meet me
When from the fount at evening I return
With the full water-urn;
Nor will thy sleep's low, dove-like breathing greet me
As midst the silence of the stars I wake
And watch for thy dear sake.

"'And then will slumber's dewy cloud fall 'round thee
Without thy mother's hand to smooth thy bed.
Wilt thou not vainly spread
Thine arm, when darkness as a veil hath wound thee,
To fold my neck and lift up, in thy fear,
A cry which none shall hear?

"'What have I said, my child? Will He not hear me
Who the young ravens heareth from their nest?
Shall He not guard thy rest
And in the hush of holy midnight near thee
Breathe o'er thy soul and fill its dreams with joy?
Thou shalt sleep soft, my boy.

"'I gave thee to thy God—the God that gave thee
A well-spring of deep gladness to my heart.
And precious as thou art
And pure as dews of Hermon, he shall have thee,
My own, my beautiful, my undefiled,
And thou shalt be his child.

"'Therefore, farewell. I go—my soul may fail me,
As the hart panteth for the waterbrooks
Yearning for thy sweet looks;
But thou, my first born, droop not nor bewail me,
Thou in the shadow of the Rock shalt dwell,
The Rock of strength.—Farewell.'"

The mother went back to her old home leaving her child behind her, and there is no doubt for a time it seemed lonely and desolate. Wherever she looked there was something, a vacant room, a broken toy, a half-worn garment, to remind her of the one who had brought such light and joy into her life. As she sits there in her loneliness, no one is present to climb upon her knee as aforetime, to place his loving arms about her neck and cheer her heart with little tokens of affection. But when she remembered her former reproach and how God had taken it away, and what pleasant memories she now has, her heart was comforted. Her own home was more lonely, but the temple of God was brighter because of her boy. Other boys were growing up in wickedness, but hers was trimming the lamps or performing other needed work about the tabernacle. While she was sure he was in safe hands, her motherly heart was still solicitous for his welfare. She came up year by year to attend the services of the tabernacle, and she witnessed with pleasure the growth of her only child, "as he ministered before the Lord," and grew in favor with all. "She made him a little coat, and brought it from year to year when she came with her husband to the yearly sacrifice." As she wrought upon the garment, how her thought went out after the absent boy who was soon to wear it, and to Him who rules the destinies of

men that he would preserve him from all evil. No doubt she pictured a bright future for him, as all mothers do for their children, but she scarcely had any conception of the high position to which he was afterwards called, and the great honor which God put upon him. At the present time his immediate duty would be found in trimming the lamps, looking after the sacrificial fires, and doing such other work under the direction of the high priest as his tender years would allow. Eli became very much attached to him, and he found the more comfort and consolation in this faithful boy, because that his own sons were disgracing him and embittering his life by their profligate conduct. Later on, Eli, who had been "so impressed by the fine qualities of this child, so affected by the circumstances of his birth, and so gratified by the excellent conduct of the parents, bestowed upon them his solemn blessing and prayed that they might have rich returns in kind for the child they had so faithfully and entirely *lent* to the Lord. And so it came to pass, Hannah had afterwards three sons and two daughters. This was large interest for her 'loan.' But the Lord is a very bountiful paymaster; and amidst all the fervid speculations which inflamed the world, to lend to him remains the very best investment which any one can make of aught that he possesses."

Child of prayer as Samuel was, and reared under the influence of an intensely earnest Christian mother, his own nature seemed heavenly, and the Lord honored all this by early choosing him as a medium for the communication of divine truth. One of the most thrilling passages in the whole Bible describes the first direct call of God which comes to this consecrated child. He slept at night within call of the high priest, who is growing old, and "his eyes began to wax dim that he could not see." The old man was in the habit of requiring his services at night. In the dead of night, toward morning, before the lamp had gone out, Samuel hears a voice which seems to be that of Eli, and three times he responds. The aged priest sees something more than human in the call and instructed Samuel how to do. A wonderful message was communicated to him, even a terrible judgment upon the house of Eli. He lay quiet until morning and proceeded to his work as though nothing had happened. He would have kept it

to himself, but when solemnly charged by Eli, he told him all that had passed. "The whole story is a beautiful introduction to the life of the last and most favored of those prophetic magistrates who interpreted to the Jewish people the will of God. Samuel was the last of the Judges, the strongest, the purest, and most blameless—the worthy son of such a mother."

Abigail—the Superior Wife

"For woman is not undeveloped man,
But diverse; could we make her as the man,
Sweet love were slain; his dearest bond is this:
Not like to like, but like in difference.
Yet in the long years liker must they grow:
The man be more of woman, she of man;
He gain in sweetness and in moral height,
Nor lose the wrestling thews that throw the world;
She mental breadth, nor fail in childward care,
Nor lose the child-like in the larger mind;
Till at the last she set herself to man,
Like perfect music unto noble words.
And so these twain, upon the skirts of Time,
Sit side by side, full-summed in all their powers,
Dispensing harvest, sowing the To-be,
Self reverent each and reverencing each,
Distinct in individualities,
But like each other e'en as those who love.
Then comes the statelier Eden back to man;
Then reign the world's great bridals, chaste and calm;
Then springs the crowning race of human kind.
May these things be?"

—*"The Princess," by Alfred Tennyson.*

Abigail—the Superior Wife

THE Apostle James tells us that "Elijah was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months." That he should have fled from the face of a heathen queen who threatened his life, after the magnificent victory on Mount Carmel, very greatly confirms the statement that he was made of the same clay as other men. We lose very much of the helpfulness of Scripture biography when we consider the characters therein described as a class separate and apart from ourselves. They are human beings, bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh, and therefore more or less subject to the influences and aspirations which belong to all human beings. Their mental and spiritual development may have differed from our own; the prevailing ideas of the age in which they lived, and their local surroundings, were not like ours; but they were human beings, none the less, and subject to the hopes and fears, the aspirations and the weaknesses, which belong to the race.

There is a tendency either to overrate or underrate all historical personages. If they are commendable characters, we lose sight of their weaknesses, we conceal their sins, and unduly magnify and exalt the better part of their natures. If they are morally bad, as was Jezebel, or inordinantly ambitious, as was Bonaparte, we lose sight of their better qualities and make conspicuous the evil. Hardly any man is as bad as he is painted, or as good as the records of history would make him. We are taught that David was a man after God's own heart; and when this is said, men point to his crimes as proof to the contrary. The real truth is, that his life was a mixed life, as are all others. In the height of his power and under strong temptation, he committed great sins, as in the case of Bathsheba and Uriah. When he realized what he had done, he loathed himself for his wickedness, he sorrowed with a great sorrow for what he had done, and did all he could to make restitution for the wrong. Take the record of his

whole life; every man who reads it is made better thereby. It is not that of a man whose general life is wicked, with here and there a ray of light making the blackness of his deeds the greater, but of a man who is imperfect, yet in whom goodness and virtue are the rule and wickedness the exception, a man who is trying to get away from his weaknesses and constantly reaching up after his mind's ideal.

When we think of his wickedness, let us remember that wonderful confession in the fifty-first Psalm: "Have mercy on me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: . . . blot out my transgressions. Wash me throughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me." Think of that friendship for Jonathan, passing the love of woman! Hearing that David was in the forest of Ziph, he resolves to visit him, to encourage him by his counsels, to tell him "the hand of Saul my father shall not find thee." Here they made a brotherly covenant in which David promised to show favor to Jonathan and to his descendants forever. Look at him as he gazes on the body of his ungrateful son and cries out in the agony of that hour, "O, my son, Absalom, my son, my son Absalom, would God I had died for thee. O, Absalom, my son, my son." He was, in the highest sense, a poet. "He has left us elegies, odes, triumphant songs, descriptive pieces, and sacred lyrics, in which every chord of the human heart, every motion of the soul, every aspiration of the spirit, is touched with the master hand. So deeply does he sound the depths of man's nature, so loftily does he soar to the gates of light, that no poet has ever lived whose ideas have become so much the common property of nations, none in whose beautiful word the hopes, the fear, the joys, the griefs, of the spiritual man have found such adequate expression. They are no less appropriate, at this day, in the mouth of the weaver at his loom and the cord wainer at his stall, than they were of old to the men who sat beneath the fig tree and the vines of Canaan."

He was goodly to look upon. "The eyes of men rested upon his engaging and happy countenance with pleasure, and withdrew from it with regret. The rare combinations in him of all that was gentle, tender, mild, with the most exalted enthusiasm, the most noble aspirations, the most generous sentiments, the most manly

deportment, the most heroic daring, and the most invincible prowess, joined to his invariable consideration for others, his openheartedness, his humbleness, and the entire absence of pretense in him, made men feel better when they looked upon him; and it exalted their hearts to know that they were sharers of the nature which, under divine grace, became capable of such impressive development. . . . Above all, he had deeply studied such parts of the sacred Scriptures as then existed. His writings continually evinced his close acquaintance with it, his admiration for it, his intense appreciation of its value, his love for it. 'Thy word have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against thee. I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies as much as in all riches.'"

Samuel was sent to Bethlehem to anoint one of the sons of Jesse to be king. Because "the Lord looketh on the heart and not on the outward appearance," the older brothers were passed by and the youngest son, a lad of fifteen, was chosen. The consecration by the prophet brought no immediate change in his pursuits. He lived the life of a shepherd, developing through communion with nature that wonderful genius for music and poetry which manifested itself in the Psalms, and that daring and courage which stood him so well in the contests of his after life. King Saul was subject to fits of melancholy, and it was said, "an evil spirit from the Lord troubled him." Some one remembered that a son of Jesse was skillful in playing, and it was thought that music might help to allay the troubles of Saul. One day, there came a command to Jesse from the king: "Send me David thy son, who is with the sheep." It was ten miles to Gibeah. With his shepherd staff and scrip, and with his light harp swung across his back, he reaches the king the same day that he had left his home. The king was greatly pleased with the young man, and sent to Jesse a message saying, "Let David, I pray thee, stand before me, for he hath found favor in my sight." So he remained some time, and when Saul's fits came upon him, David took his harp and played before him, and the delicious strains of music lulled the king's melancholy, and he "was refreshed and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him."

The king seems to have improved, and David, after a time, went back again to his father's sheep. Two or three years pass away, and David is on his way to the army to visit his brethren.

There is war with the Philistines, and the three eldest sons of Jesse are in the camp. There comes a time when David is divinely moved to offer himself against Goliath. The king consents, and David goes forth and slays the giant. He is now a public man, and there is no more private life for him. He seems to have outgrown the memory of the king, but the latter needs such men, so from that day he "would let him go no more to his father's home." From the day of his promotion, his troubles began. The people praised David for what he had done, and the king began to fear that David was the coming man. He was "afraid of David because the Lord was with him." The king's dislike finally took on the form of violence. He was no longer safe in his presence; so under cover of the night, he fled from the court, and until Saul's death, a period probably of seven years from this time, he is a fugitive and an outlaw. He soon gathered about him some chosen spirits who loved him and who were dissatisfied with the conduct of the king. He went from place to place rendering such assistance as he could and defending those who needed defense. "It was not his purpose to set himself forth as a competitor for the crown; that, his sworn friendship for Jonathan, no less than his determination to await the course of the Lord's providence, forbade. He was enabled, however, to take a stand upon the defensive, and to assume such a position before the public eye as would engage the interest of the people in his person and movements, and prevent his claims, his services, and his wrongs from passing out of mind." A larger body of men united their destinies with his, and he must so use them that he will not be understood to assume any hostile attitude toward the king nor give the people any cause of complaint. He would employ them most likely "in protecting the cattle in the wild and open border country into which the great sheepmasters sent their flocks for pasture, from the depredations of their marauding neighbors, such as the Arabs, the Amalekites, the Jebusites, the Hittites, and others. This species of service creates a claim for a kind of tribute from the wealthy persons thus so essentially benefited, of food and other necessaries, which is almost invariably, most willingly, and even thankfully rendered, and when not so, is enforced as a matter of right."

It was during this period of his outlaw life that the following incident occurred: In the town of Maon, in the southern part of Judea, we are introduced to a husband and wife. They are living luxuriantly and are quite wealthy, for among his possessions at Carmel were "three thousand sheep and a thousand goats," and other property, no doubt, to correspond. The wife's name was Abigail, meaning "joy, exultation of a father." The name might have been given to her to express the father's joy that so interesting a daughter had been given to him to add to the comfort and pleasure of his home. We are told that she was a woman of "beautiful countenance." This was a very desirable gift, in the possession of which any one might well rejoice. While regularity and a proper proportion in the features are desirable, this is not the highest type of beauty. Says Addison: "The head has the most beautiful appearance as well as the highest station in a human figure. Nature has laid out all her art in beautifying the face; she has touched it with vermillion, plaited it in a double row of ivory, made it the seat of smiles and blushes, lightened it up and enlivened it with the brightness of the eyes, hung it on each side with curious organs of sense, given it airs and graces that cannot be described, and surrounded it with such a flowing shade of hair as sets all its beauties in the most agreeable light. In short, she seems to have designed the head as the cupola to the most glorious of her works."

But she was a woman of "good understanding" and this is infinitely preferable to a well-proportioned face, as desirable as that may be. We believe the highest kind of beauty is that which makes a revelation of thought, feeling, and purpose. "As matter is pervaded with life, we recognize a new beauty different altogether in kind and higher in degree. The masses of earth put on a new charm when a free life wreathes its towering heights with coronets of forest green, or decks its great vales with waving grain, or spreads upon them its tapestry of foliage and flower. Earth comes nearer to us, enters deeper into the spirit sympathies, when she robes herself in forms of life, even in her more massive shapes. In her minuter parts and far above the beauty of mere matter, is the regularity and fitness and ideal or specific harmony which vegetable life so universally evinces; the expressive depth and brilliancy, and their graceful blending and delicate gradation

showing everywhere the traceries of a divine pencil. . . . As we enter the region of sentient being, still richer, more essential, more perfect grades of the ideal meet us."

She was evidently a woman of good judgment, prudent and discreet, one who knew it were easier not to enter into a quarrel than, when once in, to make your way out with honor. She had the skill to adapt herself to circumstances and to win favor from such a man as David. The strange thing is how she happened to be joined to such a boorish, unappreciating husband; and yet not so strange when one stops to think, for there are plenty of such ill-matched pairs in our own day and with our increased civilization. Her husband's name was Nabal, which meant "fool." He is described in the record as "churlish and evil in his doing." That would mean brutal, illhumored, covetous, and narrow-minded. He was avaricious and selfish, as was evidenced by his conduct. He thought only of his possessions and worshiped his wealth. He would be a man hard to manage because unreasonable. No one could have much influence over him. Even his servants, who no doubt knew him best, said he was "such a son of Belial, that one cannot speak to him." A man who was sufficient in himself and did not care to take any advice from others. But there is a worse record than this. When his wife returns home, she finds he is having a feast in his house, "like the feast of a king; and Nabal's heart was merry within him, for he *was very drunken;* wherefore she told him nothing less or more until the morning light." What sort of companionship did this coarse, brutal, drunken man furnish to this woman of great beauty and intelligence?

We wonder how she came into such unpleasant associations. A woman of such taste could not have preferred it. A woman of "good understanding," prudence, and discretion, would not of her own judgment have made such a blunder. In those days, as now, a drunken husband was not the kind to be selected by a sensible woman. Our inquiry is in part answered by the fact that among the Jewish people, in those days, the alliances of the daughters were contracted and arranged for by the parents themselves. They might not have known his bad qualities, or, if they did, they might have found others which compensated for them. There are

things which, in the eyes of ambitious parents seeking positions for their daughters, will cover a multitude of sins.

He belonged to one of the most distinguished families in Israel. He was a descendant of Caleb, who was one of the faithful with Joshua, and, on account of his faithfulness, Joshua gave him this district of Maon to belong to him and his descendants forever. He is supposed to have been a descendant of Hobab, a kinsman of Moses. By a comparison of two or three Scripture references, there is reason to think that he sprang from Rechab, whose son Jehonadab commanded his son saying, "Ye shall drink no wine, ye nor your sons, forever." Jeremiah afterwards said, "Because ye have obeyed the command of your fathers, therefore the son of Rechab shall not want a son to stand before me forever." To be a descendant of this family of total abstainers, did not save Nabal from the curse and disgrace of strong drink. In a sense, every man is the maker of his own fortune. No splendid line of ancestry, desirable as it is, will cause a man to live a virtuous, upright life. Nor will humble and unknown ancestry hinder a man from walking in the path of honor and uprightness if he so desire. Nabal, like the men of to-day who have a good line of descent and yet live disgraceful lives, so lived because he had surrendered to his appetite, and reason was no longer allowed to rule.

This man was wealthy in flocks and herds, and then, as now, that fact alone would atone for many weaknesses. Many a handsome girl of good life and character, is sold to some villainous man who has great estates and money in bank. Money will conceal his imperfections of character, will compensate for his lack of morals, will even make up for the absence of intelligence and good sense. The clean, pure, tender-hearted woman who commits her all to the keeping of a coarse, rough, drunken man, whose most attractive quality is that he has wealth, has made a sad mistake which nothing can remedy but death. "Gold cannot buy happiness, and parents who compel their daughters to marry for money or station, commit a grievous sin against humanity and God. And the woman who marries a churl for his wealth will find that she has made a terrible bargain; that all the glitterings of heartless grandeur are but the phosphorescent gleamings of heart-wretchedness; that her life will be one of gilded misery, and her old age

will be like a crag on the bleak side of a desert mountain, where cold moonbeams sometimes glitter but no sunshine ever falls, no flowers bloom, no birds sing, but wild storms howl and hoarse thunders roar; and through the sweeping storms shall be heard the stern voice of the great God, saying, 'Your riches are corrupted, your garments are moth-eaten, your gold and silver are cankered, and the rust of them shall be a witness against you and eat your flesh as if it were fire.' "

This man's wealth consisted, to a great extent, in sheep and goats. As many as three thousand of the first and one thousand of the second are mentioned. While the shepherds were looking after their flocks, they met a band of outlaws who showed them unexpected kindnesses. These were David and his men, who "abode in the wilderness of Maon." Had David or his men been so disposed, they could readily have molested the shepherds and carried off the sheep, but the shepherds themselves spake very highly of these men saying, "The men were very good to us and we were not hurt, neither missed we anything as long as we were conversant with them when we were in the fields. They were a wall to us both by night and by day, all the while we were with them keeping the sheep." Such protection as David gave is very highly valued in the East, and a suitable present to the protecting party will be thought of as a matter of course by every thoughtful man.

There came a time, however, when there was a great banquet at Carmel. The sheep had been gathered in from the wilderness for shearing. As a part of the festivities appropriate to the occasion, they have eating and drinking, "like the feast of a king." David and his men having been pursued by Saul, their resources are limited, their provisions about exhausted, and hunger begins to gnaw their vitals. They hear that Nabal's flocks are gathered in for the shearing. They could easily pounce down on the shepherds and supply their own wants; but David, injured and banished, and hunted like a partridge on the mountains, is neither robber nor thief. He selects from his attendants an embassy of ten men and sends them to Nabal. The shepherds at once recognize them as belonging to the chief who had defended them in the wilderness. As they approached, they courteously made a triple salutation, and thus delivered the message which David had given

them: "I have heard that thou hast shearers: thy shepherds have now been with us, and we did them no hurt, neither was there aught missing unto them, all the while they were in Carmel. Ask thy young men, and they will tell thee: wherefore let the young men find favor in thine eyes; for we come in a good day: give, I pray thee, whatsoever cometh to thine hand, unto thy servants, and to thy son David."

The request could not have been a more courteous one, and would without doubt have reached the heart of any ordinary man. They justly merited, at the hands of this man, everything they asked. From a man of such notorious obstinacy, they could not be sure of civil treatment. If anything were needed to justify the appropriateness of his name, Nabal—fool—it was his reception of this message. When he had heard them through, he broke out in his fury, "Who is David? and who is the son of Jesse? There be many servants now a days that break away every man from his master. Shall I then take my bread, and my water, and my flesh that I have killed for my shearers, and give it unto men, whom I know not whence they be?" It is more than likely this man lied in this statement in order to make excuse for his stinginess. It is not at all probable that a man of such wealth would not hear of David. Indeed it is more than probable that the shepherds had reported to Nabal how they had been protected. If he did not know, he could readily have asked them, and they would have told him that David not only kept his own native followers from interfering with them, but had in addition protected them from bands of marauders which infested the wilderness.

The men returned and reported to David how they had been treated. He is a man of strong passion, and he is indignant at the treatment received from this wealthy fool. He does not intend that either himself or his men shall be insulted. If this man will not do as other men are glad to do, give some little compensation for the valuable services they have rendered him, he shall lose all he has, including his own life. He gives instruction to his men, "Gird ye on every man his sword: and they girded on every man his sword; and David also girded on his sword, and they went up after David about four hundred men; and two hundred abode by the stuff."

In the meantime, as soon as the ten men had departed from Nabal, the shepherds saw the danger which their master and themselves would incur. They knew the justice of David's request, and they also knew he was not the man to endure patiently such ungrateful treatment. One of them at once reports to Abigail, the wife, saying, "Behold, David sent messengers out of the wilderness to salute our master, and he flew upon them." Having reported how kindly David had treated them, he says further, "Now consider what thou wilt do, for evil is determined against our master and against all his house; for he is such a son of Belial that one cannot speak to him." Now is the time for a woman of understanding to show her skill. She is grieved at the foolhardiness of her husband and realizes the impending danger to all. The wellbeing of her household is at stake, and something must be done at once to meet the emergency. It will amount to nothing to consult her husband, so she must decide for herself. After a little reflection, she determines what to do. Taking "two hundred loaves, and two bottles of wine, and five sheep ready dressed, and five measures of parched corn, and a hundred clusters of raisins, and two hundred cakes of figs," and having commanded her servants to go before, she followed in the direction of the wilderness.

David and his four hundred men were already on the way to Nabal's house, nor was he in a pleasant mood. He soliloquized with himself as he rode along: "Surely in vain have I kept all that this fellow hath in the wilderness, so that nothing was missed of all that pertained unto him; and he hath requited me evil for good. God do so unto the enemies of David and more also if I leave of all that pertained to him, by the morning light, so much as one man child." As he looks up from his musings, he sees a woman, whom he had never seen before, approaching him with a company of servants. When she saw David and his company of men, she alighted from the animal on which she rode and fell before David and bowed herself to the ground, finally falling at his feet and uttering the following impromptu address, one of the finest specimens of literature extant:

"Upon me, my lord, upon me be the iniquity; and let thine handmaid, I pray thee, speak in thine ears, and hear thou the words of thine handmaid. Let not my lord, I pray thee, regard

this man of Belial, even Nabal for as his name is, so is he; Fool is his name, and folly is with him; but I thine handmaid saw not the young men of my lord, whom thou didst send. Now therefore, my lord, as the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, seeing the Lord hath withholden thee from bloodguiltiness, and from avenging thyself with thy own hand, now, there, let thine enemies, and those that seek evil to my lord, be as Nabal. . . . Forgive, I pray thee, the trespass of thine handmaid: for the Lord will certainly make my lord a sure house; because my lord fighteth the battles of the Lord, and evil shall not be found in thee all thy days. And though man be risen up to pursue and to seek thy soul, yet the soul of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of life with the Lord thy God; and the souls of thine enemies, these shall he sling out as from the hollow of a sling. And it shall come to pass, when the Lord shall have done to my lord according to all the good that he hath spoken concerning thee, and shall have appointed thee ruler over Israel, that this shall be no grief unto thee nor offence of heart unto my lord, either that thou hast shed blood causeless, or that my lord hath avenged himself: but when the Lord shall have dealt well with my lord, then remember thine handmaid."

In all this address she speaks as a thoughtful, pious, shrewd woman should speak. There is not a word of fulsome flattery in it. In the future he will be pleased to remember he did not shed causeless blood. The woman throughout is dignified, prudent, discreet. Everything about the address indicates a breadth of thought, an elevation of language, a comprehension of the proprieties of the occasion, which mark her as a woman of more than average mental and moral worth, and infinitely superior in every way to the ignorance and boorishness of her drunken husband.

"Abigail appears as an agent of the spirit of God, and the prophetic spirit breathes through her words. She speaks to David in the manner of the prophet. She sees clearly and declares to David with vigorous, heart-searching and conscience-piercing words that his high-handed, revengeful purpose is against God's law and order. She convinces him of his deep guilt, and brings him to acknowledge that she is God's instrument to save him from a wicked deed which would have cast a dark shadow over his future life. She announces his future royal calling and his lofty mission therein as hero to wage the wars of the Lord against the

enemies of God's people, earnestly exhorts him to walk comformably to the glory and holiness of the calling, predicts under this condition the continuance of the royal dignity in his house, and promises him the rich blessings of the favor of God. Thus, in her is presented the type of the guardian's watch-office of prophecy in relation to the royal office. Abigail can so speak only as moved or filled by the prophetic spirit; and the means thereto were her personal relations to the prophetic circles, whose center Samuel was till his death, and to which all true, God-fearing persons attached themselves. As the prophetic community was at this time of great importance for awakening and cherishing a new religious life in the people, it cannot be surprising if we meet with personages like Abigail among the people, filled and illuminated with the prophetic spirit."

Her mission is a successful one. Her beauty, her good sense, and her kindness of heart have disarmed the warrior, and his sword falls by his side. His passion is allayed and he remembers he is the anointed of God to care for his people and not to destroy them. Gratified that he has been prevented from shedding causeless blood, he exclaims: "Blessed be the Lord thy God which hath sent thee to me this day, . . . and blessed be thou, which hast kept me from shedding blood." David received at her hand the present she had brought, with which she had purchased the life of her husband and her household. He says to her further, "Go up in peace to thy house: see, I have hearkened to thy voice and have accepted thy person." She has saved her husband and his property, and when she returns to report the success of her mission, she finds her lord shamefully drunk and in no condition to hear of the wonderful success which his superior has achieved. In the morning hour, when the "wine was gone out" and the drunken stupor was over, she told of the fearful danger that awaited him and how it had been averted. He seems to have some little conception of how grandly he had played the fool and nearly destroyed his own life as well as the lives of his household, but there escaped from him no word of thankfulness to the faithful wife who had secured his escape from impending peril. "His heart died within him and he became as a stone." Most likely a stroke of paralysis or apoplexy had fallen upon him. This seems to be only a temporary recoil of feeling from which he

afterward partially recovered. We do not know, however, that there was any true amendment of life. This appears to have been the exciting cause of some malady which finally carried him off, for we are told that "about ten days after, the Lord smote Nabal that he died."

In the midst of his wealth, he was compelled to lay down his life, unwept, most likely, by friend or relation. So far as we know, he died as he had lived, a son of Belial. The wife is now free from the dead body she has so long carried. Death is the great divorcer, and daily relieves men and women of heavy burdens. He comes at times as a great blessing. Did this woman lament for this man? How could she realize the feelings which come to those who in such an hour are conscious of a great loss? "Though the noble Abigail, whose married life had been one continued scene of unhappiness, could but shed tears over the untimely fate of her brutal, drunken husband, who was so poorly prepared for the fearful realities of the eternal world, how could she sincerely lament the stroke that separated her from an inferior, churlish man whom she did endure but could not love? As well might the prisoner lament the decree that opens his prison doors, or the oppressed lament the blow that breaks the tyrant sway, or the crushed slave lament the stroke that shivers his fetters and lets him go forth to breathe the air of freedom."

And yet, unpleasant as he must have been, so far as the record is concerned we find that she did all for him that she could have done, had he been the right kind of husband. When the servant reports how badly he had insulted David's men and the danger that was impending because of it, she could not deny the justness of the accusation, so she says nothing. She puts forth every energy of her nature to save her husband's life and property, although the destruction of that life would have lifted a great burden. In her meeting with David, she confessed he was a foolish man and he alone was to blame, but all this was done to save his life. When she returns home to report to him of her success, he is in a drunken stupor and not able to comprehend it. When she finally makes report to him, there are no sharp thrusts, no biting sarcasms, no expression of indignant feelings, which the man so richly deserved. Everywhere she appears as the faithful, patient, suffering, devoted wife. Her pleading before David with earnest

heart and modest, dignified bearing, and her appearance before her cowardly husband after his night's debauch, would each be a fitting scene for the brush of a painter; and yet, so far as we remember, while other women have had special prominence, for some reason this one appears to have been neglected. David had married Saul's daughter Michal, who had been given him in place of Merah, the one promised. When the rupture between Saul and David had become open, she was taken from him by her father and given to another man. He had before this time married Ahinoam of Jezreel. The impression made upon David by the beauty and good sense of Abigail when she came to meet him, was a permanent one. Some time after the death of Nabal, he sends his servant to make an offer of marriage to this wealthy widow. When David's wish was made known to her, she responded, "Behold thine handmaid is a servant to wash the feet of the servants of my lord." Taking with her her five female servants who usually accompanied her, she went after the messengers of David and became his wife. In addition to her own person, she brought him no little money, for she was rich. How much she influenced his after life, we are not able to tell. Up to this date, he is an outlaw with no fixed residence. It is not long until he takes up his residence at Hebron. She accompanied him in all his future fortunes. She was with him when he joined Achish at Gath. When the Amalekites attacked Ziklag, they carried off his wives, and David was greatly disturbed. With four hundred men he pursued after them, recaptured his wives, and secured all that had been taken away. After Saul's death he removes to Hebron, where he was anointed king of Judah, and these wives are with him there. By Abigail, he had one son named Chileah. We know nothing further of the particulars of this woman's life, nor when nor where she died.

"She doeth little kindnesses
  Which most leave undone, or despise;
For naught that sets one heart at ease
And giveth happiness or peace
  Is low esteemèd in her eyes.

"She hath no scorn of common things; and,
  Though she seem of other birth,
Round us her heart entwines and clings
And patiently she folds her wings
  To tread the humble paths of earth.

"Blessing she is; God made her so;
And deeds of week-day holiness
Fall from her noiseless as the snow;
Nor hath she ever chanced to know
That aught were easier than to bless.

"She is most fair and thereunto
Her life doth rightly harmonize;
Feeling or thought that was not true
Ne'er made less beautiful the blue
Unclouded heaven of her eyes.

"She is a woman—one in whom
The springtime of her childish years
Hath never lost its fresh perfume,
Though knowing well that life hath room
For many blights and many fears."

—*Lowell.*

The Queen of Sheba—
the Wise Woman

"The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here."

—*Jesus.*

The Queen of Sheba—the Wise Woman

WHEN the scholarly scribes and the hypocritical Pharisees said to Christ, "We would see a sign from thee," he answered them by saying, "The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here" (Matthew 12:42). Elsewhere she is referred to as the Queen of Sheba. Arabian tradition names her Balkis, but we have no more definite knowledge of her name than this. While the names given to the Hebrews were especially significant, it is a fact that the names of some of the most remarkable women of the Bible have not been given us. We are to remember "Lot's wife," and mention is made in not very commendable terms of "Job's wife," but the name of neither is known. We are also introduced to the "woman of Shunem," the "widow of Sarepta," and "Jephthah's daughter."

As she is supposed to have come from Arabia, the Arabian traditions would find a place for her name and fame in their literature. They say that before she went to see Solomon she sent ambassadors with a letter to Solomon; that with these she sent five hundred youths dressed like maidens and the same number of maidens dressed as young men, with instruction they were to behave in the presence of Solomon as their dress would indicate. She had a thousand carpets prepared inwrought with gold and silver, a crown composed of the finest pearls and hyacinths, and many loads of amber, musk, alloes, and other products of her country. To these she added a casket, and in it was an unperforated pearl, a diamond intricately pierced, and a goblet of crystal. In this letter she writes: "As a true profit thou wilt no doubt be able to distinguish the youths from the maidens; to divine the contents of the enclosed casket; to perforate the pearl; to thread the diamond; and to fill the goblet with water that hath not dropped from the clouds nor gushed from the earth."

The story is further told in their traditions that when they reached Jerusalem, "Solomon told them the contents of the letter

before they presented it, and made light of their mighty problems. He caused the slaves to wash themselves and from the manner in which they applied the water detected their sex. He directed a young and fiery horse to be ridden through the camp at the top of its speed and on its return caused its copious perspiration to be collected in the goblet. The pearl he perforated by a stone occultly known to him. The threading of the diamond puzzled him for a moment, but at length he inserted a small worm which wound its way through leaving a silken thread behind it. Having done this, he dismissed the ambassadors without accepting their presents." This, with other reports brought to her, determined the queen to visit the king in person.

She is called the queen of Sheba. This country is generally understood to have been situated in the southwestern part of Asia between the Indian Ocean and the Red Sea. The early geographers divided this whole land into Happy and Desert Arabia; after the city of Petra had become prominent, there was a third division made, commonly but improperly called Stony Arabia. The name "Happy" by some has been thought to be due to the richness and variety of the natural productions of this part as compared with the lack in other parts. Others think it comes from the Arabic name *Yemen,* which, though denoting the land of the *right hand* or *south,* has for a secondary meaning the sense of the "happy, prosperous." This embraces the greater portion of the country known to us as Arabia. The modern Yemen is especially productive and at the same time, from its mountainous character, picturesque. "The settled regions of the interior appear to be more fertile than is generally believed to be the case; and the deserts afford pasturage after the rains. The principal products of the soil are date-palms, tamarind trees, vines, fig trees, tamarisks, acacias, the banana, and a great variety of thorny shrubs which, with others, afford pasture for the camels; the chief kind of pulse and cereals, coffee, spices, drugs and resins, cotton, and sugar."

The Yemen country originally embraced the most fertile districts of Arabia and especially the frankincense and the spice country. At present it is limited to the territory bounded by the Hejaz on the north, Hadramaut on the east, with the seaboard of the Red Sea and Indian Ocean. Its original limits were much

more extensive. According to Arabian tradition, this country was settled by Joktan, the second son of Eber, Shem's great-grandson. Seba was the name of the most important city and generally of the country and nation. Near the city was a famous dike to store water for the inhabitants of the place and to arrest the descent of the mountain torrents. The classics are agreed in ascribing to the Sabaei the chief riches, the best territory, and the greatest numbers of the four principal peoples of the Arabs. The hills of this country now are, and doubtless were then, cultivated to their tops in terraces and by means of artificial reservoirs. "The valleys and water courses are exceedingly luxuriant; the adjacent seas are filled with superb shells; and the Persian gulf on the one hand furnishes the finest pearls, the Red Sea on the other the most beautiful corals of the world."

Milton, in his picture of Paradise, had this country in view when he wrote:

> "To those who sail
> Beyond the Cape of Hope, and now are past
> Mozambique, off at sea, northeast winds blow
> Sabean odors from the spicy shore
> Of Araby, the blest."

And this same land is described in *Lalla Rookh*:

> "Glistening shells of every dye
> Upon the margin of the Red Sea lie.
> Each brilliant bird that wings the air is seen;
> Gay, sparkling loories, such as gleam between
> The crimson blossoms of the coral tree,
> In the warm isles of India's sunny sea;
> And those that under Araby's soft sun
> Build their high nest of budding crimson,
> In short, all rare and beauteous things that fly
> Through the pure element, here calmly lie
> Sleeping on light."

The author of the Book of Chronicles tells us that "all the kings of the earth sought the presence of Solomon to hear his wisdom that God had put in his heart." In the olden time men made long journeys in search of wisdom. To some extent, this is done to-day, but for the most part with our varied means of communication, the great multiplicity of books and periodicals,

we may obtain a very extensive knowledge of men and things about our own firesides. And yet wherever you go, you find the ever-present traveler. The writer once surprised one of the inhabitants of Palestine, who was piloting him through that country, by the statement that he was there to gather information. To have come for religious purposes as the Mohammedan goes to Mecca would have been perfectly intelligible, but to be there in the pursuit of knowledge or pleasure seemed to be a very insufficient reason for traveling. In ordinary times the acquirements of a Jewish king would not have excited much inquiry, and more than likely would not have been heard of beyond the boundaries of his own territory. But this was a remarkable king and he ruled over a wonderful people. They had formerly journeyed through a portion of Arabia on their way to their present home. Wonderful conquests had been made, the report of which no doubt had gone out among the neighboring nations. Remarkable buildings had been constructed, an extensive commerce had been entered upon, and their vessels floated upon many waters. Solomon's matrimonial alliances with foreign nations, consummated no doubt with a view to extend his influence, would contribute no little to awaken a desire on the part of many to see and converse with him. Some would come possibly to see the wonderful structures that had been erected; others perhaps to listen to his words of wisdom and learn how to rule more wisely their own peoples. These persons, coming now and again with their concourse of servants, their gilded trappings, their large gifts, as was the custom of the age, would make no little stir in the city of Jerusalem, and cause the people to be not a little vain of their king who attracted such distinguished people with their retinues to their capital.

The sacred records give us an account of one of these remarkable visits. The fleet of Solomon, on its way out to Ophir, or maybe on the homeward trip, had no doubt put in at some of the queen's ports. These visits brought to her ears the rumor of a king who knew more than any other. She concludes she must see this man and seek from him information to settle some of the problems of life. These men from the vessels may have been summoned into the presence of the queen, and at her invitation have told her of the wisdom and glory of their monarch. As these Hebrews were a religious people, they may have brought with

them some of their religious writing for this woman to examine, for when she comes before Solomon she does not seem to be ignorant of the God he worships. "When the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon, concerning the name of the Lord, she came to prove him with hard questions." It is possible that a woman of her reflection and energy of character was dissatisfied with the religion of her ancestors. There may have arisen within her a longing for something more exalted and comforting than "the transmigrations of Hindoo philosophy or the sublimated sensualities of an Arabian heaven, could promise."

To have undertaken such a journey in those days was no little thing. It required no small amount of preparation and toil, and days and nights of weariness before it could be consummated. Arrangements must be made for her government during her absence. Abundance of gold and spices must be gathered to be presented as gifts to this wonderful king. Soldiers and servants worthy of her rank must be arranged for. She has a journey of twelve hundred miles before her. When everything is ready the journey is commenced, and, either borne in a sedan, or throned on a camel, or mounted on an Arab horse, she starts forward. "Sixty nights her pavilion was to be pitched, and sixty mornings they struck again before she reaches her destination." Long months may elapse before she will look into the faces of her cabinet counselors or see her people again.

There is no account of the march given, but we know what the usual traveled route was and what hers must have been. "Her course first lay between the Red Sea and the Porphyry Mountains. The first city she met was what is now called Mecca, where there then stood a pagan temple with three hundred and sixty images, now, of course, a Mohammedan sanctuary. Then she passed the burning springs which are surrounded by perpetual vegetation. The second city passed is what is called Medina, where is now the tomb of Mahomet with its four hundred columns and three hundred lamps which are kept constantly burning. A few days' travel beyond that brought her in view of Mount Horeb and Sinai. With awe she must have looked upon this desolation; for traditions of the awful scenes enacted there, embellished with all the copiousness of a luxuriant Oriental fancy, doubtless had reached her ears and invested them with an indefinable strange mysterious-

ness. Next arose before her the hills of Arabia, beyond which she entered the barren desert; and traversing its sandy waste she came to the Dead Sea, in whose waveless bosom cities lie entombed. Then fording the ever-flowing Jordan she entered into Canaan; and inasmuch as southern caravans always went northward in the spring, Judea must have looked surpassingly beautiful in its spring-tide luxuriance; for the winter was past and gone, flowers and singing birds appeared, the voice of the turtle dove was heard in the land, the fig tree was putting forth its green figs and the vines their tender grapes, perfuming the air. Then directing her course toward Jerusalem, she came to the Mount of Olives, upon whose sacred height a thousand years afterward our Savior wept over a degenerate nation, and passed over the same road he so often traveled on his way to Bethany. She reached the summit where far-famed, hill-throned Jerusalem burst upon her eager gaze."

It is possible that Solomon, knowing of her approach and realizing the high compliment paid him by such a visit, went forth to meet her with the cordiality and splendor befitting such a queen and such a monarch, and escorted her into the city. She had brought with her a "very great train with camels that bear spices and very much gold and precious stones." She came herself as an honest, earnest inquirer. She had learned that here was a man of marvelous wisdom and abundant in all his resources. She felt very sure there were questions he could not answer. She did not come unprepared, for no doubt there were perplexities, inquiries, and doubts which to her had never been satisfactorily solved. We all have them. How much we would give if certain doubts could be cleared away, if our conjectures could be verified, and our minds forever set at ease. Precisely what she desired to know, is not revealed. We are very sure there were no flippant questions asked. She had not come this long distance simply to gratify her curiosity. It is said of her that she came "to see the wisdom of Solomon." It may not have been simply the worldly wisdom which he could manifest, although that would have been keenly appreciated by one who was herself a woman of exalted attainments. May it not have been that wisdom which Solomon himself characterized in these words: "Happy is the man that findeth wisdom and the man that getteth understanding; the merchandise

QUEEN OF SHEBA BEFORE SOLOMON

of it is better than the merchandise of silver and the gain thereof than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies, and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her"? When she "heard of the fame of Solomon concerning the name of *the Lord*, she came to him with hard questions." May her main purpose, therefore, not have been a religious one? May her relation to the Hebrew people not have been such that she was dissatisfied with the teachings of heathen philosophy, and was in search of something which could satisfy the cravings of a human soul?

If she inquired concerning the "name of the Lord," then no doubt she learned, maybe for the first time, how her first parents went astray and how a Savior was promised them who should save the world. The patriarchs had taught the people and kept alive this hope which was to redeem Israel. In due time, a nation was born, and through that nation a Deliverer was to come. The temple was to be a place in which the daily sacrifices would constantly remind the people of a Messiah who was to appear and who did appear one thousand years from that date. She may also have learned something of her own blood-relationship with this people from whom the Messiah was to appear.

There is no doubt but that she would be interested along other lines; and as she had come from the land of perfume and flowers, he would speak to her "of trees from the cedar that is in Lebanon, even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall." In addition to this, he might also have spoken "of beasts and of fowl and creeping things and of fishes," concerning all of which he was well informed. There may have been regular scientific descriptions of what was known on these various subjects in his day. It is more than likely, however, that they were such concise observations as a thoughtful, discerning man would gather up during his eventful life. "The Jews have a notion that a considerable portion of Solomon's observations of this kind are preserved in the works of Aristotle, to whom, according to them, his great pupil Alexander sent a copy of Solomon's writings which he met with in the East."

We are told further in connection with this man, that in the course of his life he had found sufficient leisure to compose three thousand proverbs and of songs one thousand and five. We may

have some of them in the Psalms and perhaps in the "song of songs" which bears his name. Of his "Proverbs" we have many specimens left, and the Book of Ecclesiastes, if properly ascribed to him, contains such lessons of practical wisdom and such valuable observations on man's life and nature, as would in part account for the wide-spread reputation which he acquired.

"She communed with him of all that was in her heart." She no doubt had many an interview during the months she spent in the city. Such an earnest, intense, interested questioner would call out the very best there was in a man. The orator is eloquent when the flashing eye and the bent body show the hearer to be wide awake and listening. The teacher is at his best when the pupil manifests a desire for knowledge. Here was a heart-to-heart communication. There was no asking questions for the sake of simply putting them; no mere filling in, in order to be polite. It was an earnest heart-longing for light, and she had come to the fountain which she had heard was able to supply. Nor was she disappointed. "There was not any question hid from the king which he told her not." She may have propounded to him riddles or fables or allegories, as was a common form among the ancients of testing the skill of their opponents, but whatever form the questions might take, Solomon was ready with an answer. What an intellectual treat that must have been! A cultured queen conversing with a learned king, permitted to ask him any question she chooses out of the perplexing and unsolved problems of her life, and not a single one goes unanswered. It was worth a month's travel and a distance of twelve hundred miles over rough roads to enjoy such a privilege as that.

After such a manifestation as this, she expected to find everything else in keeping with so exalted a station, and she was not disappointed. To supply his table for one day required thirty stalled oxen, two hundred fat sheep, besides innumerable deer and fowl. If such were the ordinary fare, we may imagine what it would be on an occasion like this. She saw the two hundred targets and three hundred shields and various other vessels all of gold. She saw the ivory throne with its twelve carved lions, the thousand chariots and twelve thousand horsemen. With these she gazed upon the gardens of spikenard and saffron and pomegranates and cinnamon, the "orchards planted with all kinds

of fruit" and beautiful with "fountains and pools of waters." She also saw the massive stone walls built up from the valleys to support the temple, some of these immense blocks remaining to this day. She beheld Solomon's palace, the most gorgeous in the world, the queen's palace, the house of the forest of Lebanon, the porch of judgment, all studded with pillars glittering with gold and richly adorned with carvings of birds and flowers. She heard the singers and the "musical instruments of all sorts." She was not admitted to the temple, but saw the ascent by which the king went up thither; and possibly through the gates and doors she may have seen the brazen sea, and the glory of the Lord filling the place.

After her eyes for days had witnessed such unspeakable magnificence, and her ears had listened to such wise sayings, such pertinent replies, such untold treasures of wisdom, is it strange that the inspired writer should say, "There was no more spirit in her"? She came possibly with a clear idea of the perplexing questions she should ask him, and the answers came to her with a flash. How frank, open, and honest the statement she makes to him. "It was a true report that I heard in mine own land of thy acts and of thy wisdom. Howbeit I believed not the words, until I came, and mine eyes had seen it." All of which was very natural. Such wonderful stories had been told by travelers that she was sure they must be exaggerations. The only true way was to come and verify the statements if true. And now, after having tested this man by the most difficult questions which her ingenious brain could devise, she says, "The half was not told me. Thy wisdom and thy prosperity exceedeth the fame which I heard." What a new world has been opened up to her! How cheerily she will now go back and take up the burdens of government! How much richer and fuller and sweeter life will be henceforth! "Happy are thy men, happy are these thy servants, which stand continually before thee, and hear thy wisdom." If she had been so blessed, how happy would those be who were constantly in the presence of such a man! To be permitted to hear his conversation, even to catch a stray word now and then would be a great blessing. How well they should serve, for they get such gleams of light, such words of revelation and consolation, as men never heard before! She bestowed upon the king rare and costly gifts, "an hundred and

twenty talents of gold [estimated by some to be over $2,000,000] and of spices a very great store, and precious stones: there came no more such abundance of spices as these which the queen of Sheba gave to king Solomon."

How long she remained we cannot determine. If she came with the merchant caravan she may have remained two months or more in Canaan. The time comes when her mission is completed and "she turned and went to her own country." She went not out empty-handed, however. We may be very certain she lost nothing by her gifts. "King Solomon gave unto the queen of Sheba all her desire, whatsoever she asked, besides that which Solomon gave her of his royal bounty." In other words, he gave her according to the custom of kings, which we are sure would be very liberal, and in addition to this gave her everything else she desired.

There is a general belief among the Jewish writers that the queen was turned from her dumb idols to worship the living God by the instruction which Solomon gave. This is not an improbable supposition. The words which connect "the name of the Lord" with the wisdom of Solomon seemed to suggest such an inference, and this is reinforced by the words with which she closes her address to Solomon. "Blessed be Jehovah, thy God, which delighted in thee to set thee on the throne of Israel; because Jehovah loved Israel forever, therefore hath he made thee king to do judgment and justice." There is additional testimony to this theory in the fact that a hundred and sixty-seven years before the coming of Christ, the faithful and pious Maccabees propagated a pure religion more readily in Sheba than elsewhere, and that the people here were morally superior to the rest of the Arabians. That such a condition of things should be found centuries after her death, is a compliment to her earnest life, her good example, and efficient teaching. "It is the crowning praise of this crowned woman that in all probability she faithfully discharged the high duties of her sphere, benevolently communicated her knowledge to her subjects, and fulfilled the mission of her life."

It is certain that Arabia received Christianity early, but our knowledge is limited concerning it. Paul, after his conversion, retired into Arabia for some two years; but whether this time was spent in preaching or in private exercises is not known, nor is there any record of the fruits of his labors. There is a tradi-

tion that other apostles, Peter, Thomas, and Bartholomew, had preached there. According to Eusebius, an Arab ruler sent to Demetrius, bishop of Alexandria in the beginning of the third century, asking for Origen as a teacher. Between the years A.D. 247 and 250 a synod was held under the presidency of Origen for the consideration of a certain heresy. Among the Saracens and Bedaween numerous conversions took place in the fifth century. Several important bodies were entirely Christian, and one writer reported in the sixth century that he found everywhere in Arabia Christian churches. When Mohammedanism came in, the Christian church had long been established in several parts of Arabia, but it had become corrupted, being associated with monachism and with the worship of martyrs, relics, and images. At this time, a large number of Jews were in Arabia. After the destruction of Jerusalem many of these had retired hither, while some of them, adopting the fierce manners of the desert, chose a wandering life; but in general the Jews were peacefully settled in towns and fortified castles, principally along the coast, or dispersed among the inhabitants of large cities.

With our more modern ideas of woman's supposed unfitness for public life, and the tendency on the part of many to keep her deprived of all part in the selection of rulers and to confine her duties to the sphere of domestic life, it seems a little strange to find, at the distance of nearly three thousand years back of us, a woman of such ability and culture occupying so prominent a sphere. It is asserted, however, and with some show of reason, that this was not an accidental thing, but that the superiority of the female was an acknowledged fact not only among this people but among other nations. "Although in Arabia in the time of the prophet, descent was traced in the male line, the evidence is almost unlimited, going to show that it was not always so but, on the contrary, that at an early age *relationships were reckoned through women,* mothers being the recognized heads of families and tribal groups. In his work on *Kinship and Marriage in Early Arabia,* Prof. W. R. Smith says: "If a kinship tribe derives its origin from a great father, we may argue with confidence that it had been the rule that children were of their father's tribe and kin; while, on the other hand, if we found, in a nation organized on the principle of unity of tribal blood, tribes which trace their origin

to a *great mother* instead of a great father, we can feel sure that at some time the tribe followed the rule that the children belonged to the mother and are of her kin. Now among the Arabs the doctrine of the unity of tribal blood is universal, as appears from the universal prevalence of the blood feud. And yet, among the Arab tribes we find no small number that refer their origin to a female eponym. Hence it follows that, in many parts of Arabia, kinship was once reckoned not in the male but in the *female* line." From a number of facts, "we are given to understand that originally there was no rule of reckoning kinship in Arabia *except by the female line*, and that the change of descent from the female to the male line affected society to its very roots."*

The same author further says: "By a careful study of the growth of government is observed the fact that liberty, fraternity, and equality were the original and natural inheritance of the human family, and that tyranny, injustice, and oppression are excrescences which subsequently fastened themselves upon human institutions through the gradual rise of the egoistic principle developed in human nature. We have seen that, until the beginning of the latter status of barbarism, the gens constituted a sovereign power in the tribe; *women controlled the gens*, and sachem and chief were alike invested with the authority necessary for leadership because they could trace their descent to some female ancestor who was the acknowledged head of the people and whose influence and patronage must have extended over all the individuals included within the recognized bond of kinship. With the deposing power in the hands of women, and with the precautions which were taken by them against injustice or usurpation of rights, it is plain that unless some unusual or unprecedented circumstances had come into play, they never could have lost that supremacy which as the natural result of higher organization had been maintained since the separation of the sexes."†

That which especially attracts us to this woman is the strength of character which she manifests. We find her in an exalted position, most likely the result of inheritance rather than of choice, but she is not occupied with thoughts of the diadem she wears, the

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*Gamble's "Evolution of Woman," p. 112.

†Gamble's "Evolution of Woman," p. 137.

royal palace in which she dwells, the number of her subjects, or the wealth in her treasury. She finds no fit employment in the amusements of the hour, the mazes of the giddy dance or the enticements of cards and dice, seeing in these, fitting occupations only for those who have nothing else on which to employ their thoughts. The charms of fashion and dress which amuse so many and help to while away hours that might otherwise hang heavily, have no attractions for her. No doubt she has tasted of the sweets of Oriental poetry and exhausted the teachings of pagan philosophy. The flattery of her courtiers, the well-meant praises of her people, and the daily compliments of others, are frequently in her ears, but she wants something better than all these. These are not fitting food with which to feed an immortal soul. How should she best rule her people? How should she best live the ideal life? A rumor of a wisdom above that which her teachers or her books can give has come to her ears. Hundreds of miles away among a strange people lives this remarkable man. The long distance, the dangers of the journey, through desert waste, over intervening mountains, and across bridgeless rivers, would have discouraged a woman of less force of character. After carefully counting the cost, she starts out upon a journey that will take miles of travel and keep her months from home. She accomplished her journey and was repaid a thousandfold for what she had done and suffered. She returns to her own home a different woman, in every way better fitted by the breadth of vision which had been vouchsafed to her, to meet the responsibilities of coming life.

Our Savior complimented her wisdom, and blamed the Pharisees because they did not manifest as good judgment as did she. They were seeking for some marvelous sign, but there were signs all about them which their hard hearts did not permit them to interpret. The queen "came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here." He stood in their very midst and talked with them and spake such words as never man spake. He answers greater questions, distributes greater blessings, and reigns in more glorious state. "When he sees Solomon in all his grandeur, sees the man who made of the almug tree pillars for the house of the Lord and for the king's house, harps also and psalteries for singers,

when he beholds this great Solomon, he takes up a blade of grass and plucks a flower of the field and says, 'Even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.'" The queen made the most of her opportunities and these scribes and Pharisees did not. She sought the truth and they turned away from it and finally crucified the Lord of life. Therefore the "queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation and shall condemn it."

Jezebel---the Heathen Queen

"The alienation from the religious traditions of the nations was complete. All that was sacred in the popular feelings was outraged by the settled purpose of the crown to extirpate the worship of Jehovah, even unto the symbol of Jeroboam's calves, and establish Phœnician idolatry as the only tolerated religion of Israel. This was Jezebel's purpose. Haughty and ambitious, looking on the foreign people among whom she had come to dwell, with insolent contempt, a fanatic for the religion of her own country as was natural in the daughter of a priest, she knew how to make her husband the passive agent in carrying out her plans. A vast temple to Baal was built in Samaria, large enough to contain an immense throng of worshipers. It stood, apparently, within a great walled enclosure, and rose in such strength as to seem like a castle. A huge image of the sun-god, flanked by idolatrous symbols, was seen within, amidst a blaze of splendour reflected from gilded and painted roofs and walls and columns. A staff of four hundred and fifty priests in their vestments ministered at their altars, and Ahab himself attended the worship in state, presenting rich offerings, doubtless amidst all the wild excitement and license which marked the service of Baal."

—Dr. Cunningham Geikie, in "Hours with the Bible."

Jezebel—the Heathen Queen

IN the days of Solomon, there were some commercial relations between his kingdom and that of Tyre and Sidon. After the division of the kingdom, the connection was not so close as it had been before. The southern kingdom, however, still looked to Tyre as a mart for its surplus agricultural products. After the division, a tie of a stronger than mere business interest grew up between the northern kingdom of Israel and this nation along its western border. The kingdom of Syria, in the northeast, was becoming stronger and growing a little more aggressive, and the Tyrians would feel a special interest in securing the king of Israel in possession of the territory which alone separated them from a dangerous neighbor. This neighbor had already wrested from Omri, the father of Ahab, a portion of his territory. The tendency, therefore, was to draw the two courts of Tyre and Israel more closely together, the friendship of the one being desirable to the other. In order to make this union the stronger, a marriage was arranged between Ahab, the son and heir in Israel, and Jezebel, the daughter of the king of Tyre. The father must have known that the feeble character of his son, when brought under the control and influence of a strong-minded woman, would surely affect the religion of his country; but it is not likely that he cared much for that, for he carried out the policy of Jeroboam and in the eyes of the Lord his conduct was worse than all the kings before him. For the sake of political aggrandizement, a union was formed of these two kingdoms, which in every respect resulted disastrously.

Ethbaal, meaning *with Baal,* that is, enjoying his favor and help, was the name of the king who was the father of Jezebel. He is said to have been at first a priest of Astarte. The worship of the two was so closely allied that it is possible that a priest of Astarte might have been dedicated also to the service of Baal and borne his name. It was natural that this woman, being the daughter of a priest of Astarte, should become a zealous promoter

of idolatry. Her baneful influence not only wrecked her own life and her husband's and almost destroyed the northern kingdom, but extends even to the throne of Judah in the person of her daughter Athaliah. Josephus tells us that twenty-one years after the death of Ethbaal, the father of Jezebel, that his granddaughter Dido built Carthage and founded that commonwealth; so we can judge what sort of spirit animated the female members of this royal family.

This woman was, of course, taught to believe in and to practice the worship of Baal, and that she learned her lesson well and was a faithful adherent is shown by her whole after-life. In general, we may say that Baal represents the sun, and in connection with Astarte, or the moon, was very extensively worshiped by the idolatrous nations of western Asia as representing the great generative powers of nature, the former as the symbol of the active and the latter of the passive principles. The symbol of this god, as well as the name, varied somewhat in different localities. "Baal, originally worshiped without any image and typified only by pointed stone pillars embodying an obscene symbol, was ultimately represented in human form, riding on a bull, with bunches of grapes and pomegranates in his hands. . . . Alongside of this god stood his female counterpart. Her symbol was the rough trunk of a tree with some twigs left on it, and this was raised alongside the pointed pillars of her consort. Sacrifices were offered to her in shadowy groves and on artificial mounds."

"This worship, in its most prominent aspect, had indeed become a mere formal sanction of impurity. The Mylitta worship of Babylon was vile enough, but the hotter blood of the Phœnicians and the sensuality of the great trading cities carried similar abominations to excess. The central idea of the worship of the Ashera was lewdness. At the feasts of the goddess and at that of the resurrection of Adonis, the high places, the sacred groves, the very roads became scenes of universal prostitutions, its gains being made over to the temple treasuries. Every temple had besides, at all times, great bands of women and mutilated men consecrated to impurity. The Syrian Baal, Hercules, a hermaphrodite idol, was worshiped with an exchange of dress by the sexes, the men appearing as women, the women wearing men's clothes and weapons."

"Self mutilation was the highest and most acceptable offering to Ashtoreth. On the days when the festival of the Syrian goddess is held, a great crowd of priests and many Galli (self-mutilated men) and Kaleshim (men consecrated to impurity) take part in the rites, cutting their arms and lashing their backs as they circle in the altar in wild religious dances amid the din of flutes, cymbals, and songs to the god. Carried away by the wild excitement, not a few of the spectators lose all self-control and, breaking into frenzy, mutilate themselves with a sword bared ready for the purpose. These Galli, or self-mutilated men, wandered through the country often in bands. In the evening when they reached a stopping place, they made up for the bloody chastisements of the day by a debauch and, if the opportunity offered, gave themselves up to every abomination. . . . *What followed further is unfit to be told.* But so deeply did the revolting heathenism of Phœnicia taint Israel in after years, that Josiah found numbers of such wretched men established in the precincts at the temple of Jerusalem, along with a body of women who openly wove tents for the impurities of the worship of Ashera."

The name Jezebel is probably from the same root as our word "Isabel" meaning pure, chaste. What mockery the name would suggest on the part of one who accepted and practiced and sought to promulgate such a system of debauchery in which she evidently must have believed! "It was with a religion so revolting, alike in its impurity and cruelty, that the pure worship of Jehovah had to contend, nor can its value to mankind be better realized than by the contrast they offered. The struggle between the two was one of life and death, for they could not exist together. Nor could any spectacle be of loftier interest for the history of our race than that which this sustained battle of light and darkness exhibited during the centuries after Solomon. Through these ages, the true religion continued to attack the foul abominations of heathenism with an invincible energy, a tenacious persistency, and an exhaustless enthusiasm, under the most unfavorable circumstances, till it not only gained the victory but drove from its midst whatever could remind it of the idolatry it abhorred."

Before the arrival of Jezebel at the capital of the nation, the Israelites had not cast off their allegiance to God, but they had degraded his worship by partial rites and by an illegal priesthood,

The golden calves which were worshiped were, after all, meant to be visible emblems of an invisible God. No doubt this woman was honest in her profession of her idolatrous faith, and goes to work energetically to make it the religion of the nation. She wins her husband over to her faith, if indeed he could be said to have any faith at all, to such an extent that he practically abdicates, and, although he is God's representative, he interposes no obstacles to her plans. On the contrary he builds her an ivory temple at Samaria and erects thereon a collossal statue of the sun-god. Altars were everywhere set up for the worship of her god, sacrifices were offered, and bloody and objectionable rites were performed by a numerous priesthood. Like so many missionaries, these had been imported from her own people for the express purpose of establishing the new faith in the new nation. It is said that five hundred of these were sustained about the palace at her own expense. There is no question but that this was fast becoming the court religion, and while many, for policy's sake, would adopt it, the vast majority would not oppose it and perhaps would give a divided attention to it.

No doubt the queen and those with her who sympathized with Baal worship, were entirely willing that others should worship Jehovah if they wished. They were willing to accept Jehovah as one God but not their God. He had no claims on them which they recognized. But the people of Israel had been thoroughly instructed by their prophets that there was but one God and that, having given them this land, he had the exclusive right to their worship, from the king down to the lowest subject. So the judgments of God were denounced on the cities which had established this false worship and upon those who engaged in it, and they announced the authority by which they made such utterances. This would excite a bitter persecution against those who worshiped God, and especially against those who were prophets. Their conduct might also be construed as disloyal to the court and to the measures which it was promoting. If the prophets believed the two religions could not coexist, it was then simply a question as to which should succeed, and this strong-willed queen determined it should be the faith in which she was brought up. Led by the inducements of the royal court, or to escape the results of the hostility which the queen was manifesting toward the worshipers

of Jehovah, the nation had practically become a nation of idolators. When she could lay her hands upon the nation's priests, she did so and put them to death, save one hundred hid for a time by Obadiah. "The golden calf had been established at two provincial towns at the opposite extremities of the kingdom, without any temples but simply with emblematic images and altars. But now the worship of Baal was centralized in the metropolis, where a temple doubtless of considerable splendor was erected and ceremonial services rendered by numerous bodies of priests. Samaria could now pride herself on being an ecclesiastical as well as royal metropolis, like Jerusalem; and doubtless many not over-wise pious persons reckoned that something the realm had hitherto wanted was now at last supplied. The queen had succeeded. *She rules over a nation of idolators.*"

The nation has taken a wonderful moral stride downward. Something must be done to save it or it will be wrecked. Suddenly, and almost as if by magic, a rough, rude-looking, stern man from the mountains, whom God had been preparing for his mission, appears in the king's presence and gives him a simple, plain message. "As the Lord God of Israel liveth, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, according to my word." This is all, and the man suddenly disappears. Three long years of want and famine and suffering have come and gone, and the man stands before this same king again. "Art thou he that troublest Israel?" inquires the king, who had been for these many months sending his cattle up and down the land to find water to drink. This is no time for polite phrases nor for words of double meaning. The prophet, true to the facts, replies, "I have not troubled Israel, but thou and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord and thou hast followed Baalim." Elijah is here for a purpose and proceeds with his work. The king was authorized to gather Israel together, with the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and of Asherah four hundred also. They assemble in due time on Mount Carmel. He proposes there, in the presence of all this assembled multitude, to determine for this king and his people who is the true God. A satisfactory test is made, and the people, in the exaltation of the hour, cry out, "Jehovah, he is God!" Elijah commanded that the priests of Baal and Asherah be taken and slain, and the indignant people carried out

his command. Ahab could not resist, nor was he the man to set himself against such tremendous odds.

The king is sent home with the promise that there will be plenty of rain. When he reaches the palace, the anxious queen no doubt desires to know what the day has brought forth, and "Ahab told her all that had been done"; all about the proposition to test who was the nation's rightful Lord; the test of the matter by fire, to which, of course, the sun-worshipers could not object; and how in the end the astounding decision was in favor of Jehovah and against Baal. But he did not stop here. He told her "withal how he had slain all the prophets of Baal with the sword." How the labor of years seemed in that moment to melt away! At her own expense she had kept these men and built up this royal court, and now at a single blow her labor of love seems to have been all swept away. An ordinary woman would have stood appalled at such a condition of things. As she sat down to supper that night, how many chairs were empty, not to be occupied again! She has no tears to shed now. Her wrath is kindled into fury. She may be too excited to lay plans for Elijah's capture, or she may be more anxious to drive him from the country. She will show him that she has royal blood in her veins, so she sends a messenger to say to him, "So let the gods do to me and more also if I make not thy life as the life of one of these, by this hour to-morrow." Courageous words in such an hour as this!

Would you believe it?—this prophet became afraid of Jezebel and fled for his life! The man who yesterday stood against eight hundred and fifty priests of Baal without flinching, standing there for God before the idolatrous king and thousands of assembled Israel, commanding and advising in the destruction of these very idolatrous prophets he now receives this message and then flees for his life! He hardly stopped to look back until he was almost one hundred miles from Jezebel, and here he sat down exhausted and wished he might die. And this is the prophet of God, sent by him, with divine authority back of him, to beat back the on-coming forces of idolatry, and he flees from duty before the threat of a wicked woman! Alas for the weakness of human nature. "He had an appointed post to occupy and a determined duty to fulfill, in which his Master would certainly sustain him, and from which not even the fear of certain death should have permitted him

to flee. Suppose, indeed, he had been absolutely certain that the Lord would not interfere, and that to stay was death—how could he know but that the Lord's cause might be better promoted and his great name be more glorified by his death than by his life? From such a man as Elijah we are entitled to make exactions of duty, from which commoner men might be excused. In him, of all men, we are entitled to look for the martyr spirit; for if not in him, in whom in that age was it to be looked for?"

We have sometimes wondered what would have been the result if this man Elijah had stood manfully at his post. Was not this the most fitting time, was he not here for that purpose, to push forward the work of reform in this northern kingdom and to circumvent the plans of Jezebel? After the wonderful manifestations at Carmel where the queen's priest had been out-generaled and humbled and finally destroyed, when the people with a fresh zeal and a great shout were ready to follow the new leader, was not this the time to reëstablish the worship of Jehovah, if need be over the dead body of Jezebel, and utterly drive out Baal worship from the land? And yet this man, who faced all these prophets on that remarkable day and seemed to have the faith and courage of a giant, let pass this splendid opportunity and, when threatened by the queen, ran for his life.

Suppose when he heard this woman's threat, if the path of duty did not seem plain to him, that he should have asked Jehovah what to do. Suppose that, like Nehemiah of old, he should have asked himself, "Shall such a man as I flee? I, who represent Jehovah, who am a prophet of the Lord, whose life is in his hands and cannot be touched without his consent, after this wonderful exhibition of his power through me, shall I flee and leave God's cause unsupported and dishonored? Suppose I should lose my life, as this queen threatens, what is my life but the gift of God and to be used for the up-building of his kingdom?" The venerable Dr. W. S. Plumer used to say to his theological students, "Young men, if you get a good chance to die in the path of duty, why, die; there are many worse things than death." Even at the risk of his life, why allow work so dear to his heart and which has commenced under such encouraging auspices, to utterly fail? Alas, it is easier to ask such questions than to answer them. It is enough to know he was "a man subject to like passions as we are." Possibly a

man of nervous organism, at times capable of unlimited endurance, and yet, after such a strain of protracted excitement, subject to terrible mental depression. A man who to-day sees his prayers answered before his eyes to his heart's content, and to-morrow is too weak to ask God for guidance in the new emergency that has come to him. From the human standpoint, it seems to us he made a very grave mistake.

Who can measure the influence of an intelligent, strong-willed, bad woman? What wonderful energy, what remarkable ingenuity! What power over her husband to lead him away from his own methods of worship to support and defend those she loved! That reform movement on Mount Carmel, commenced under such thrilling auspices, would have swept the country, so it seems; yet this one woman, by the inherent energy of her nature, by the love of her own religion inwrought from childhood into her very life, threw herself against it and blocked its progress. Her priests had been slaughtered, the people had been arrayed against her, her husband is inefficient, the very God of heaven, in the person of his prophet, is opposing her, and yet she flings herself in the way of this reform and hinders it—yea, destroys it—and sends this prophet, who all along for some years has been opposing her plans, forth as a fleeing fugitive, promising him that if caught there in the morning, he shall pay the penalty of his presence with his life. In the face of this consummate courage, this daring energy, we think of Milton's Satan:

> "What though the field be lost?
> All is not lost; the unconquerable will
> And study of revenge, immortal hate,
> And courage never to submit or yield,
> And what is else, not to be overcome."

The queen is not yet done with Elijah, nor Elijah with the queen. To insure peace and escape detection, the prophet makes his way into the mountains of Sinai. The Lord, who had sent him, whose professed servant he was, meets him by way of a questioning rebuke: "What doest thou here, Elijah? I sent you to fight my battles among men, and to strengthen the heart and faith of my frightened people. What are you doing here in these solitudes away from the work I gave you?" Elijah makes reply,

if not indeed a very satisfactory one. He had been very zealous for God, but he found the altars pulled down and he the only witness left, and his life was sought. The Lord sends him back to the work, and to encourage his heart tells him that here and there in Israel there were "seven thousand knees which have not bowed unto Baal and every mouth which hath not kissed him."

"Back, then, complainer; loath thy life no more,
Nor deem thyself upon a desert shore
Because the rocks the nearer prospect close.
Yet in fallen Israel are there hearts and eyes
That day by day in prayer like thine arise;
Thou knowest them not but their Creator knows,
Go; to the world return, nor fear to cast
Thy bread upon the waters; sure at last
In joy to find it after many days."

The record is silent for a time concerning this woman, but no doubt her work of spreading the worship of her own faith and the indoctrining of her people in the same line went on as usual. Ahab was busy defending his kingdom from attacks from the east. There soon comes a time, however, when we open a new chapter in this woman's life. Although Samaria was the metropolis of Ahab's kingdom, he had a palace at Jezreel where he spent a portion of the year. It was about twenty-five miles north of Samaria and on the eastern border of the plain of Esdraelon. It occurred to Ahab, one day, that his garden would be greatly improved if he would take in an adjoining vineyard. It belonged to a man named Naboth, and, as became a king, he offered him a price for it or to give him another piece of land in exchange for it. The offer was declined on the ground that he could not and would not alienate ground which he had inherited from his fathers. He seemed to look upon the proposition of the king with a feeling of religious horror. The alienation of land among the Hebrews was forbidden by law. The rights of proprietors could not be lightly evaded. The king was disappointed and displeased at what he, no doubt, considered the intense stubbornness of his subject, but we have no intimation that he hoped to secure by any tyrannical act the land which this man did not want to sell. As expressing his disappointment, he betook himself to his bed and lay with his face to the wall refusing to take food. In this condition

of mind, his wife, full of resources, found him. Maybe this childish fretfulness was indulged in to awaken her interest and to put her fertile brain at work. He had done all that he could do. The stronger mind now takes the lead.

When she learns the cause of his apparently deep distress, she exclaims with indignant surprise and with a half-concealed taunt, "Dost thou now govern the kingdom of Israel?" It does not look much like the work of a king. Put the matter in my hands. "Arise, and eat bread, and let thine heart be merry; *I will give thee the vineyard.*" He did not know how, possibly he did not care how. He knew that her energy and ambition usually accomplished what she undertook. He gave her his signet ring, which authorized her to issue in his name any orders she wished. Documents were not signed in those days as we do with the hand in writing, nor are they indeed in the East to-day, but impressed with a seal on which the name had been engraved. She summoned a mock court of justice to try this man for blasphemy against God and the king. Think of this idolatrous queen, who had led the whole nation away from God, now playing the rôle of a reformer and seeking to enforce the law against blasphemy! She hires false witnesses who were sons of Belial, "sons of lawlessness," who swore falsely concerning this man saying, "Thou didst blaspheme God and the king." This packed jury convicted him as they had been instructed to do. They then "carried him forth out of the city, and stoned him with stones, that he died." His sons must also be put to death in order to make sure of the vineyard. "To add iniquity to the murderers, the mangled bodies were left unburied, the greatest insult that could be paid to the dead. Worse still, the prowling dogs and swine of the town were allowed to devour them; and it was noticed that the blood ran into a tank at hand which was the common bathing place of the prostitutes of the temple of Baal." This man having been put to death ostensibly for treason, his property goes to the crown, and thus Ahab secures possession. As soon as she learns that Naboth is safely out of the way, she reports to her husband to go and take possession of his vineyard. "Instead of shrinking with horror from the deed, Ahab now that it was done, accepted it with all its consequences by hastening to take possession of his blood-stained acquisition, probably not without a secret or even declared admiration of his wife's

AHAB AND ELIJAH

decision of character and hardihood—qualities which inspire such souls as his with deep reverence." But for him this was the beginning of the end.

The elders and the nobles who aided in this dreadful murder must share in the guilt. "Their whole course presupposes corruption in public affairs, a natural consequence of the religious confusion which must have entered in during a reign when the covenant of God was forsaken. There is no more authentic sign of the decay of the kingdom than when law is deliberately debased and murder, under the show of right and with deference to the usual forms of law, is done by those to whom the duty of public justice is entrusted. Deliberate judicial murder is the most infamous of all and can only take place where absolute ungodliness has broken all bounds and a putrefaction has begun. Jezebel would never have dared to order such a process had she not known the people and regarded them as capable of everything."

Jezebel here "shows herself in her complete moral depravity. Her deepest traits were pride and a desire for dominion, to gratify which she shrank back from no instrumentality. Under the show and pretext of serving her husband and fulfilling his wishes, she knew how to govern him and to appropriate to herself the royal authority. She wished the king to be considered not as a servant but as the representative of Deity. Right and justice, for the administering of which the monarchy exists, are to her mere forms, and she misapplies the legal organs of justice to carry out injustice. A religious solemnity must be the cloak of her lust of robbery and murder, and the people be deceived by perjured witnesses. Jezebel does all this in cold blood and with calm deliberation; yet she congratulates herself upon it, and informs her husband of the fact with self-satisfaction as if she had done something deserving praise and thanks. This was the royal couple at that time, at the head of the people and of the kingdom."

While Ahab is not quite willing to go the length of wickedness which his wife might do, he is still willing to enjoy the profits of her illgotten gains. He now has a garden where he may grow all the leeks he needs, but he has secured it by the murder of an innocent man, a murder which, if he did not instigate, he at least consented to. But he had forgotten, as men so readily forget, that there is a just God who presides over the destinies of nations and

individuals and who will not, who cannot, suffer such grievous sins to go unpunished. Calling his chariot, he rode out to view the vineyard, now *his* vineyard by the fine strategy of his unscrupulous and wicked wife, attended by two officers, Jehu and Bidkar, in a second chariot. He takes possession of this spot of earth, obtained at the cost of blood, and no doubt is much pleased that his grounds have had such a handsome addition. On his way home, rejoicing no doubt at his unexpected success, he was met in the way by the man whom of all others he was the least desirous to see. His long seclusion might have led Ahab to almost forget him, or at least to hope that he was dead, but to his dismay he is still alive and ready for duty. He has recovered from the weakness which sent him a fugitive from Jezebel, and he is now here ready to meet her or her wicked husband. "Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?" gasped the affrighted king; found me in the very act of a great crime? Must I always be annoyed by such men as you, constantly crossing my pathway with those awful words of Jehovah? Cannot I be let alone for a little time to carry forward my own plans?

The prophet manifests no weakness this time. He is equal to the emergency. He responds, "Yes, I have found you, and this is the reason I am here. Because thou hast sold thyself to work what is evil in the sight of the Lord." The message he delivers is a short but emphatic one: "God will cut off thy life and the life of thy posterity sparing not a man, and the dogs *shall eat Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel.*" The historian then sums up the estimate he makes of the character of this man. "But there was none like Ahab *who did sell himself* to work wickedness in the sight of the Lord, whom *Jezebel his wife stirred up*. He did abominably in following idols in all things as the Amorite nations whom the Lord drove out of Canaan for their abominations." The poor king rode back gloomy and alarmed. He rent his clothes, putting on rough sackcloth and even slept in it, "refusing food and bearing himself, for a time at least, with proper contrition, and because of this the doom which had been foretold to his house was postponed for a generation."

After the three years of peace, Ahab is tempted to break his league with Benhadad. The town of Ramoth-gilead had not been given up to Israel according to agreement. He proposes to Jehosh-

aphat, his southern neighbor, to come and go with him, and the king of Judah made an "affinity with Ahab." Jehoshaphat, who was an adherent of Jehovah, would not consent to go on such an errand without consulting a prophet. Ahab gathered four hundred of his prophets, most likely prophets of Baal who had replaced those slain on Carmel. Possibly they were nominally prophets of Jehovah, who had been selected from the meanest of the people and put into official position. Of course they knew the answer Ahab wished, and they gave it to him. "Go up, for God will deliver it into thy hands." Jehoshaphat was not favorably impressed with this proceeding and desired the prophet of the Lord, but Ahab retorted, "I hate him, for he prophesieth evil for me." Micaiah is sent for, however, and his prophecy is understood to mean the destruction of the people. Ahab is vexed and commands that this prophet be kept on the coarsest fare "till I return in peace." Micaiah responds, "If thou return at all in peace, then the Lord hath not spoken by me." We hear no more of him. He was a courageous man, swerving not a hair's breadth from the line of duty, and it is more than likely he perished in prison. Jehoshaphat does not seem entirely satisfied, but Ahab and Jezebel are the master minds of the occasion and he yields to their solicitations. The march of the allied armies of Judah and Israel now begins. Benhadad, desiring to avenge himself on Ahab, had given orders to make straight for him in battle and kill him or take him alive. He may have had some suspicion that Micaiah was telling the truth, so he proposed to Jehoshaphat, "Let me go into battle in disguise, but put thou on my robes." When the battle gathered about his chariot (supposing him to be Ahab) he cried out and his enemies turned away. Ahab, although disguised, could not escape the arrows of the Almighty. Some unknown archer drew his bow at a venture and the arrow struck Ahab between the joints of his coat of mail and his breastplate and proved his death wound. That the army might not be distracted, he had himself supported in his chariot until nightfall, and then fell to rise no more. When his death was known, the war virtually ended. "The corpse, brought back to Samaria, was duly buried in the royal tomb. Micaiah had been vindicated, nor had the words of Elijah fallen to the ground. The chariot was taken to the town pool, the blood dripping from it and from the armor, as

they were being cleansed, and running back into the tank. Such a sight was naturally long remembered, and men told their sons how the dogs were noticed licking up the dead king's blood, and how, when the temple courtesans shamelessly bathed in the pool the next morning, the waters were still tinged with red."

Ahaziah, the son of Ahab, succeeded him, but died in two years. He fell from his porch through the lattice to the street, and was carried to his bed, from which he never arose. Having been trained by his mother Jezebel in the worship of Baal, he sends to a shrine of Baalzebub, at Ekron in Philistia, forty miles southwest of Samaria. Once more the prophet Elijah, by the divine appointment, is on the track of this family. He met the messengers on their way to Ekron and sent them back to the king to tell them, "Thou shalt not come down from thy bed, but shalt surely die." When he inquired as to the appearance of the man, and when they had given it, he said, "He is Elijah"; and he sent fifty men to arrest him, most likely with the purpose of putting him to death. At the call of Elijah, fire came down and consumed them and also a second company which was sent. The third leader begged for his life and Elijah went with him and came before Ahaziah, and delivered his message in person; and the king died, as the Lord had said. The spirit of persecution was still rife against Elijah, but the Lord honored him by taking him to himself, and so far as we know neither Jezebel nor her family saw him again, but their troubles have not ended.

The second son, Jehoram, comes to the throne. Jehoshaphat also had a son Jehoram who, as a result of the visit to Samaria some years before, had married Athaliah, the daughter of Jezebel, who inherited the worst qualities of her mother. The influence of Jezebel had not only greatly injured and crippled the northern nation, but, through her daughter, the baneful example of her wickedness had invaded Judah, and this people also must suffer the consequence. Turning from the good example of his father, Jehoram king of Judah "began to walk in the ways of the king of Israel, as did the house of Ahab, and to do that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah." Before his translation, Elijah sent him a written message (II. Chronicles 21 : 12-15) admonishing him of his bad conduct, and what a dreadful death he should die. It is the only instance of which we have any record in which Elijah

embodied his words in writing. But it did no good. "Athaliah was the close counterpart of her mother and was destined to play even a more terrible part. The fierce, determined energy, the fanatical zeal for Phœnician superstition, the utter unscrupulousness alike of heart and conscience, which characterized Jezebel, were as marked in her daughter. We see her hand in the opening act of her husband's reign. He signalized his accession by the murder of his six brothers. Numbers of officials and others supposed to favor them shared their fate, that the throne might fear no disturbance. The mere tool of his wife, he let her have her way in promoting idolatry. High places to Baal and Ashtoreth rose in the cities of Judah. The worship of Jehovah in the temple was still permitted, but heathenism thus favored by the court threatened to cover the land."

"Passive under the strong and untamed will of the queen-mother Jezebel, Joram (her son), though not himself an idolator, had, like his father Ahab, allowed her to favor and to promote the heathenism she loved. The huge Baal temple built by Ahab in Samaria, with its staff of four hundred and fifty white-robed priests, was maintained with great splendor. That of Asherah at Jezreel with four hundred priests still polluted the land by its rites of worship. The vast courts of the Samaritans' temple were thronged with worshipers at the high festivals of the god. Phœnician idolatry was becoming an Israelitish institution. Sacred pillars and images glittered on all sides; that of Baal himself shone out from the darkness of the inner holy of holies, half fortress, half sanctuary, on which it rose awfully aloft. Fifty years had passed since the introduction of heathenism, yet the open worshipers of Baal were still so few, outside the court party in Samaria, that all found in the whole kingdom could assemble at one time in the temple area. Indifference, however, had spread far and wide; immorality was sapping the national character, and the future ruin of Jehovah worship seemed assured if things continued as they were." It was no better in Judah where Athaliah controlled. "A temple to Baal had already been built by her family, in part from the stones of the temple of Jehovah which had been defaced to construct it, and the sacred vessels had been taken for the service of the idol. It had its altars, images, and staff of clergy under a chief, Mattan, the only priest of Baal

whose name has survived. A heathen clique was supreme alike in Jerusalem and Samaria. The moral and political cancer of heathenism had invaded the last sanctuary of Jehovah worship. Israel had long been tainted; Judah was now in peril. . . . That a woman like Jezebel, a foreigner and a heathen, should have held sway in Israel for two reigns, lording it over the church as well as the state at the caprice of her imperial will, had become intolerable. Religion and even the nation itself must perish if the family of Ahab continued to reign."

The day of doom at last arrives. Joram, king of Israel, having received a wound in attempting to recover Ramoth-gilead, returns to Jezreel and with him is Ahaziah of Judah. The army has been left in charge of Jehu, a man who in his youth had stood high in the favor of Ahab. He is now about forty years of age, and the second in command. He had ridden in the chariot behind Ahab when he went to take possession of Naboth's vineyard, and had heard the curse on Ahab and his house. He would never forget this scene, and it may have raised some ambitious thoughts in his mind. Elijah may by his manner have intimated in some way that this man was to be the instrument of vengeance. At all events, this is the man whom the Lord commissioned Elisha to anoint as king over Israel.

Not long after Joram's absence, a young prophet, sent by Elisha, comes to the camp at Ramoth-gilead. Making his way into the house where Jehu was sitting in council with his officers, he called him apart and took him into the innermost room in the house where they would be alone. Taking out a flask of oil, he poured it upon Jehu's head, telling him that God had thereby anointed him as king to "cut off the whole house of Ahab," and "that the dogs shall eat Jezebel in the portion of Jezreel." Having done his work, he at once fled, leaving the house as suddenly as he came, while Jehu returned to his company. These men were curious to know what this "mad fellow" wanted with their superior officer, for they must have known by his garb that he was one of the prophets. He told them of his anointing, and his words kindled their disaffection to a flame. Shouts of loyalty arose from every side. Throwing their cloaks upon the ground for a carpet, they conducted him to the top of the stairs in sight of the army, blew their trumpets, and proclaimed "Jehu is king." "It is probable

that the military men were dissatisfied with the rule of a house so completely under the influence of one bad woman, and the errors and crimes of which had first and last brought so much discredit upon the nation."

Jehu shows his ability by at once starting for Jezreel, and will himself be the first to tell the fated king that his reign is over. Giving orders that no one should leave the city, he takes with him his old companion, Bidkar, with a detachment of troops, and, armed with bow and quiver, they set off at their wildest speed for Jezreel. It was a ride of more than fifty miles, but he pressed on in great haste. Sentinels on the watchtower near the palace saw the cloud of dust some miles away, and a messenger is sent to learn the news they are bringing. He was ordered to fall behind and follow, and he did, as did the second one sent. Learning that the driving was that of Jehu and suspecting no treachery, the king ordered his chariot and went forth to meet him, accompanied by King Ahaziah of Judah. No doubt he was expecting some good news from Ramoth. As soon as he sees him, the king cries out, "Bring you peace?" Jehu answers with an ominous turn of the word, "What peace can there be as long as Jezebel act so wickedly as she does?" "From this, it would seem that the fatal predominance of the influence of Jezebel in the reign of her son, as well as of her husband, was the chief ground of public discontent and apprehension." The king saw that his doom had come at last, and turning to the king of Judah said, "There is treachery, O Ahaziah," and they turned their horses for flight. Jehu did not intend to stop at any half-way measures, so "he drew a bow with his full strength." It was a fatal shot, and the next moment the king fell out of his chariot dying, close to the very field of Naboth where Elijah had said the crime of Ahab should be avenged. To stop and cast this body into Naboth's ground would require but a moment, and thus the word of the Lord was fulfilled. He was to cut off the house of Ahab, and he remembered Ahaziah, king of Judah, was Ahab's grandson, and he received a mortal wound. He died at Megiddo, but was carried by his servants in his own chariot to Jerusalem, where he was buried in the supulcher of the kings.

Jezebel was now probably about sixty years of age. She may have seen her son's murder from her own palace windows on the line of the wall overlooking the plain. At all events, she

would soon learn that her son was slain, her power gone, and the destroyer at the palace gates. We hear of no bitter wailing because her house has gone down. She did not hide in the recesses of the harem, where he had no right to enter. She was the same Jezebel she had been for years, courageous, haughty, and imperious. Her doom was sealed, but those about her should know that she feared not but would meet her fate with becoming dignity. She ordered her maids to paint her eyes that they might look brighter, and to tire her head, possibly to show that even the prospect of death did not move her. She placed herself in the high latticed window of the tower, and awaited the approach of the new king. She knew her fate hung by a slender thread, but when this treacherous man, who had been so highly honored by all her family, looked up in her face, she returned the glance with defiance and cried out, "What came of Zimri who murdered his master as thou hast done?" He made no reply to her, but, halting as he rode up, said to her attendants, "Are any of you on my side?" Two or three of those in the palace, for even here she may have had some enemies, saw their future master and responded to his look. "Then throw her down," cried Jehu, and the words were hardly out of his mouth before she lay broken and mangled on the ground, the blood splashing on the walls and the horses. Another moment and the wheels of his chariot crashed over her, he not pausing to learn if she were entirely dead. "He took possession and after a while sat down to refresh himself with meat and drink, after that morning's bloody work. The coolness of this iron-hearted man is astonishing, but not without a parallel. He probably ate with zest, and with as little saddened thought as a hunter who had spent the morning in hunting unto death the fatted deer. And why not? he would have asked. He had done a meritorious duty that day, and who had more right to eat and drink in the gladness of an easy conscience? Human sympathy and tender-heartedness are not the qualities one looks for in a public executioner, and Jehu was an executioner."

After he had eaten and drunken, he remembered Jezebel again, and said to those about him, "Go, see now this cursed woman and bring her; for after all she is a king's daughter." The parties return with horror to tell him that they could find nothing but the skull, feet, and the palms of the hand. The street dogs had eaten

the rest at the very gates of the palace. Were there none there to drive away these dogs as they ruthlessly touched the woman who had made the nation tremble and whom they had feared and honored? Were there none in her own household except those who took pleasure in such brutal treatment of one of royal blood? It may have been because they feared to do anything which might seem to interfere with this savage man who, in the height of his ambition, forgets the honor which this family brought to him, in his effort to exterminate them. He hears their report, and even in this he seems to find pleasure in the fact that the Lord had called him to such a dreadful work. "This is the word of the Lord, which he spake by the mouth of his servant Elijah, the Tishbite, saying, In the portion of Jezreel shall dogs eat the flesh of Jezebel; and the carcass of Jezebel shall be as dung upon the face of the field in the portion of Jezreel; so they shall not say, this is Jezebel."

The half-wild dogs of the East, having no owner and compelled to depend on their own resources, soon consume the dead bodies which are left to their tender mercies. "They have taken possession of the entire country, to devour its offal and consume the carcass of every dead creature; and though these operations are limited to the city, village or hamlet, not omitting the solitary farmhouse and flour-mill, yet so keen is their scent that not a mule, horse, or cattle can perish upon the highway without at least half a dozen of these hungry customers immediately appearing on the ground, ready to commence operations." Kitto quotes the following concerning a number of Indian pilgrims who were drowned by the sinking of a ferry-boat in which they were crossing a river. Two days after, a spectator says: "On my approaching several of these sad vestiges of mortality, I perceived that the flesh had been completely devoured from the bones by the Panab dogs, vultures, and other obscene animals. The only portions of the several corpses, I noticed, that remained entire and untouched, were the bottoms of the feet and the insides of the hands; and this extraordinary circumstance immediately brought to my mind a remarkable passage, recorded in the Second Book of Kings, relating to the death and ultimate fate of Jezebel, who was, as to her bdy, eaten of dogs, and nothing remained of her but the palms of her hands and the soles of her feet. The former narrative may afford a

corroborative proof of a noted antipathy the dog has to preying upon the human hands and feet. Why such should be the case remains a mystery."

"Jezebel was a woman in whom, with the reckless and licenseless habits of an Oriental queen, were united the fiercest and sternest qualities inherent in the old Semitic race. Her husband, in whom generous and gentle feelings were not wanting, was yet of a weak and yielding character which soon made him a tool in her hands. Even after her death, through the reigns of his sons, her presiding spirit was the evil genius of the dynasty. Through her daughter Athaliah, a daughter worthy of her mother, her influence extended to the rival kingdom. The wild license of her life and the magical fascinations of her arts or her character, became a proverb in the nation. Round her and from her, in different degrees of nearness, is evolved the awful drama of the most eventful crisis of this portion of the Israelitish history."

"She was one of those strong, bold, wicked women, who have played such important rôles in history. She was of the Phœnician blood, reared in the luxury and licentiousness of Oriental customs, and of a bloody, sensuous idolatry. The Mosaic ritual and the Israelitish constitution had been framed to form a barrier to preserve the people of Israel from the infection of those vices which characterized the heathen nations. By Ahab's marriage with this woman, the barrier was broken through, and the licentiousness of the worship of Baal and Astarte, the freedom of manners of the Phœnician court, the luxury and sensuality of the heathen nations, were imported into Israel. To a woman thus educated, the religion, the traditions and customs, which prevailed even in the northern kingdom, must have appeared cold, austere, bigoted, narrow, and hateful. It became her aim, therefore, to override and break down and destroy all that was peculiar and national in Israel, but in so doing she was contravening all that belonged to and sustained God's plan for Israel in human history. She braved the conflict and reasserted it in her last hour, and she and her descendants went down in the catastrophe."

"Over the few remaining fragments of Jezebel's bones, which the dogs had not time or taste to devour, we may well pause a while, not to drop any tears over fallen greatness, but to give thought to the solemn though tardy retribution which she had so

long dared the God of heaven to send, and which she had so richly deserved. Since the death of Ahab (fourteen years before) her name has not come upon the page of sacred history, but her baleful power has been felt in Israel, blocking every effort of prophet or other good men toward reform, filling Israel again with hundreds of Baal's prophets and priests for Jehu to slaughter by wholesale, even as Elijah had done at the foot of Carmel. We must doubtless ascribe it largely to her, that Elijah's influence on Ahaziah (II. Kings 1) was so inappreciable; that the glorious testimony of his ascension fell powerless on the royal court, on Samaria, Jezreel, and Bethel; and that Elisha's long succession of miracles turned to so little account as a means of impressing the nation and witnessing to the true God in Israel. That she was gifted with qualities of a most commanding sort, such as we should profoundly honor if they were sanctioned by goodness, there is no occasion to deny; but goodness seems to have been utterly foreign to her character. She was no less wicked than great, no less base than proud, persistent, and heroic. When it shall be suitable to do homage to Satan, we may afford to place on the same roll of honor this historic Jezebel."

The Shunammite---the Kind-hearted

"Oh, doubly-bowed and bruised reed,
What can I offer in thy need?

"Oh, heart, twice broken with its grief,
What words of mine can bring relief?

"Oh, soul, o'erwhelmed with woe again,
How can I sooth thy bitter pain?

"Abashed and still I stand and see
Thy sorrow's awful majesty.

"Only dumb silence may convey
That which my lips can never say.

"I cannot comfort thee at all;
On the great Comforter I call;

"Praying that he may make thee see
How near he hath been drawn to thee.

"For unto man the angel guest
Still comes through gates of suffering best;

"And most our Heavenly Father cares
For whom he smites, not whom he spares.

"So, to his chastening meekly bow,
Thou art of his beloved now."

—*Phœbe Cary.*

The Shunammite—the Kind-hearted

THE little town of Shunem, made memorable by an interesting incident in the life of Elisha, is said to be located about three miles north of Jezreel, some five miles from Gilboa, in full view of the sacred spot on Mount Carmel, and situated in the midst of the finest cornfields in the world. It was the writer's privilege to spend a few hours there on a delightful day in the fall of 1881. One of that little company, who afterwards wrote an account of the trip, thus speaks of the place and its surroundings:

"It has a delightful location, with a splendid spring, indeed several springs, so that here we found orchards of orange and lemon trees which were beautiful to look upon. We were quartered for a while in a lemon orchard thick with trees of splendid size. These two were abundantly loaded with fruit. From a single tree not less than forty or fifty bushels of lemons might have been gathered. The men, women, and children all came out of their houses or huts to look at us; not less than fifty sat around on the ground watching us all the time. Some of them were quite black, while others were white. A woman who was quite black appeared to have the management of the affairs around the garden or orchard, and was quite uneasy lest some of our company should appropriate her fruit. They all seemed to want some *baksheesh* because we had been in the garden, though nothing had been touched except what had been bought and well paid for. There are but few ruins here, and the houses are only mud huts with holes about three feet high for doors, in and out of which creep dirty women and children. Here the armies of the Philistines encamped on the slopes of Little Hermon against Saul, whose armies lay in Gilboa. . . . No one can visit these sites of ancient cities and look on these plains and mountains and notice their location without being surprised at the marvelous accuracy with which they fit into every detail of the Bible record. As I sat under the shade of a great lemon tree and read from the Bible

the history of events whose tender love and tragedy had covered this plain about Shunem, and these mountains of Gilboa, and yonder Carmel, with fadeless memories, I was almost bewildered with the accuracy of the Bible statement. Elisha was here about one thousand years before Christ was born; and yet these mountains and ruins of cities and plains fit to Bible record as your one hand fits to the other."

Samuel founded the "schools of the prophets" to give men a better intellectual culture and to fit them for God's ministry. The government of these schools rested in the hands of the prophet inspired at the time. When the students at Jericho saw that Elijah's spirit rested upon Elisha, they recognized him as their head. For some time after the departure of his master, Elisha dwells at Jericho, where he sweetens the bitter water of the spring. Soon after this, we find him at Bethel on his way to Carmel, and while at Bethel he was the instrument of a terrible judgment on the scoffers at that place. Not long after this, we hear of him at Carmel. He had a residence at Samaria while Jezebel still lived, which would indicate that the persecutions on her part were less persistent than before. It is possible there was a gathering of the sons of the prophets at Carmel for training and study, and that Elisha visited them periodically; or he may have gone there for solitude and reflection. This mountain with its many caves was a fitting place for quiet and concealment. It would have special attraction to saintly men because here was that wonderful visitation of God through the prophet Elijah whereby the power of Baal-worship was broken and God accepted as the nation's deliverer. For the purposes named above, or possibly to encourage the faithful followers of Jehovah, who may have made Carmel a place of rendezvous, or because a famous landmark in the nation's religious history, Elisha seems to have made frequent if not, indeed, regular visits to Carmel. To do this he crosses the plain of Jezreel by the village of Shunem.

Here resided a woman whose name has not been given to us but who is termed "a great woman," as did also her husband. She must have been a woman of no little social importance in the place in which she lived. She was a person of property, who found her highest pleasure in the performance of the ordinary duties of

daily life, and had no ambition for any position which would give her special notoriety. True to the instincts of hospitality which she had inherited from her race, she constrained the prophet Elisha as he passed to and fro on his religious mission to turn in and eat with them. As his visits were somewhat regular, it occurred to her that it might be more pleasant to him to have a place where he would have less interference and more opportunity for worship and reflection than he could have amid the cares of the family. She calls him a "holy man of God," which is an indication that she knew that he was a prophet and that his conduct, so far as seen by her, was in keeping with his profession. Out of kindness to the man as well as devotion to the God whom he worshiped, she said to her husband, "Let us make a little chamber, I pray thee, on the wall; and let us set for him there a bed, and a table, and a stool, and a candlestick; and it shall be, when he cometh to us, that he shall turn in thither." This most likely was a "chamber built upon the flat roof of the house, with walls which would be a protection against any attacks of the weather and not a lean-to or addition on the side of the house." The husband readily consents to so fair a proposal, and thus began, so far as known to us, the first "prophet's chamber," or preacher's room, in the world, and which has been imitated by so many other pious people down to our own day. The furnishing of this room seems very modest in the light of our present-day luxuries, and yet we have no doubt it was a source of great comfort to the tired man as he journeyed from place to place, as well as an occasion of great satisfaction to the woman whose tender thoughtfulness and warm, kind heart had designed it.

Elisha desires in some way to show his appreciation of the kindness which he was regularly receiving from this happy couple, and to make some return to them; but what was there that he could do which would be acceptable to her, a wealthy woman? Gehazi, the servant, is authorized to broach the matter to her to see what could be done He is instructed to say to her, "Behold, thou hast been careful for us, with all this care; what is to be done for thee? wouldst thou be spoken for to the king, or to the captain of the host?" Just what king is meant, we cannot positively determine, but the question would imply that the prophet stood in great

respect and favor at the court, and that any reasonable request he should make would be granted. If it meant Jehu, he would have special claims upon him, for he had called him to the kingdom and anointed him for the work. Next to the king is the commander of the army as the most influential and powerful person, and who no doubt had within his control positions which would be gratifying to an ambitious woman.

Her answer is a very delicate and at the same time a very appreciative one. She is now among her own kindred where she has resided for years and with whom she is quite familiar, and has no desire to exchange all these for a position at court. In her present position she is sure of a quiet, contented, undisturbed life. Courts are very uncertain places, and the glory which is present to-day has disappeared on the morrow. She desires no change, nor is she entertaining him for any hope of reward. She is contented where she is, and has done this to show respect for a man of God. Elisha, on hearing this report, is perplexed to know what to do for her, and he inquires of his servant if anything has occurred to him whereby they might bless this house. The servant replies there is no son in this household, and to be barren was looked upon by a Jewish wife as a very great misfortune. If anything could be done whereby this family could have an heir, their joy would be complete.

The prophet summons her to himself and she stands at his door. He tells her that about a year from that time she shall embrace a son. This was a very strange statement to her, and when she considered her own age and that of her husband, it seemed an impossibility, and she replied, "Thou man of God, do not lie unto thine handmaid; do not excite any deceitful or vain hopes in me." The year passes by and she is made happy in the possession of a bright and beautiful boy. A new joy had come into her heart and a new light into her life. To a Hebrew mother children were a very great blessing. To them "children of youth are like arrows in the hands of the mighty; happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them." They bring care and anxiety and perplexity, but what would the world be without the innocence, the good cheer, and the joys of childhood? Hear the poet sing who in his own life had tasted of the joys of fatherhood:

"Ah, what would the world be to us
If the children were no more?
We should dread the desert behind us
Worse than the dark before.

"What the leaves are to the forest
With light and air and food,
Ere their sweet and tender juices
Have been hardened into wood,—

"That to the world are children;
Through them it feels the glow
Of a brighter and sunnier climate
Than reaches the trunks below.

"Come to me, oh, ye children,
And whisper in my ear
What the birds and the winds are singing
In your sunny atmosphere.

"For what are all our contrivings
And the wisdom of our books,
When compared with your caresses
And the gladness of your looks?

"Ye are better than all the ballads
That ever were sung or said;
For ye are living poems,
And all the rest are dead."

How long she enjoyed this happiness, we do not know, but there came a time when the child, now well grown and quite a youth, went out to his father who was with the reapers in the grain field. He was in the open field, exposed to the hot rays of a Syrian sun and was suddenly stricken down. "I know by experience that this valley glows like a furnace in harvest time." (*Land and Book.*) He was immediately carried to the house and set on his mother's knee till noon, and died. She laid him on the bed of the "man of God" in the prophet's chamber, shut the door and went out, leaving him there. In a sense, he had been to her a gift of the prophet. It was with a sad and desolate heart that she turned away. Had she never known the joys of motherhood, her sorrow would not have been so deep nor her heart so stricken. No one who has not passed through such an experience can have any real conception of the agony of this mother's heart:

"Out of the wild and weary night
I see the morning softly rise;
But oh, my lovely, lovely eyes,
The world is dim without your light.

"I see the young buds break and start
To fresher life when frosts are o'er;
But oh, my rose-red mouth, no more
Will kiss of yours delight my heart.

"The worm that knows nor hope nor trust
Comes forth with glorious wings displayed;
But oh, my little golden head,
I see you only in the dust.

"I hear the calling of the lark
Despite the cloud, despite the rain;
But oh, my snow-white hands, in vain
I search to find you through the dark."

A ray of light seems to enter the mother's darkened soul. The child was the prophet's blessing. She entrusts it back to him by placing it on his bed in his room. She will go to him with the full confidence that whatever he can do will be done. She asks of her husband for one of the young men to go with her to the man of God and she will return again. He says to her, "It is neither new moon, nor sabbath"—the times no doubt for special religious services. He supposes that in the depth of her affliction she is seeking spiritual comfort. She does not open her heart even to him, but simply says, "It is well." When all the arrangements have been made, she urges the servant to drive rapidly. She may possibly have thought that if help came in time the fleeting breath might once more be brought back. In a warm climate the body would decompose more rapidly, hence; to her mind, if anything be done to bring relief it must be done quickly. In due course of time she reaches Mount Carmel, and when Elisha saw her coming in such great haste, he knew something was wrong; and to show his respect for her he sent his servant to salute her, she being some distance away. He was instructed to inquire if it were well with herself, well with her husband, and well with her child. She is anxious to see the prophet himself, and not caring to be delayed with explanations to the servant, she answers it is well. She hastens to the prophet, and now, overcome with the grief which hitherto she has managed in good part to suppress, she clings to

ELISHA RAISING SON OF SHUNAMMITE

his feet begging his assistance. The servant, thinking this was an offense to the dignity of his master, sought to prevent it, but the prophet rebuked him. The Lord had not told him of the sickness of the child, hence he had not gone to Shunem. The mother in her grief repeats to him what she had said before, implying thereby, "I did not complain of my childlessness and did not demand a son; now, however, I am more unhappy than before, for it is better never to have a child than to have one and lose it."

What will Elisha do, what can he do? He has had one example before him with which he is more or less familiar. The widow of Zarephath, who had been so kind to Elijah, had a son and he died. She was a widow and the last hope that bound her to life was gone "The arms which had so often clung caressingly around her, and whose future strength promised to be as a staff to her old age, are stiff in death. The eyes which glistened so lovingly when she came near, now know her not. The little tongue whose guileless prattle had made the long days of her bereavement short, is now silent as that of 'the mute dove.' Alas, alas that it should ever be a mother's lot to close in death the eyes of one whose pious duty, if spared, should be in future years to press down her eyelids! This is one of the great mysteries of life, to be solved only thoroughly, only fully to our satisfaction, in that day when, passing ourselves the gates of light, we behold all our lost ones gather around our feet."

She seemed to reflect somewhat on Elijah, but he had not the heart to reprove her for her hard suspicion of him. He asked for the child, carried it to his own room, and placed it upon his bed. He gave vent to his emotions and in that hour his indomitable faith reaches after a victory—a victory such as human weakness never grappled with before. "Behold this great man in his chamber, alone with the corpse of that fair child. See how vehemently he strides up and down, gradually working himself up to the height of the great demand which gleams before his thought. Hear him, as he ventures to expostulate, humbly indeed, but with some soreness of feeling, natural enough—only too natural to one who reflects that afflictions attended him wherever he went. Trouble he could bear so that it came upon himself alone, but it was hard to feel that his presence brought nothing but misery to those who befriended him most. 'O Lord, my God,' he cried, 'hast thou

brought evil upon this woman with whom I sojourn by slaying her son?' This thought was hard to bear. Again he lashes himself up to his great purpose which had not crossed the minds of man since the beginning of the world, because no man had the same degree of faith—the faith to deem it possible that the dead might be restored to life at man's urgent prayer. It is done. His purpose is taken. The child shall live. Nothing is too hard for the Lord. It is as easy for him to give back life as to take it; and he will do this if asked with adequate faith. Elijah felt the true mountain-moving faith heaving strong within him, and he gave it unrestrained vent. He threw himself upon the corpse, as if in the vehement energy of his will to force his own life into it; and while he cried with mighty and resistless energy to God, to send back to this cold frame the breath he had taken, faith conquered. It was adequate and therefore irresistible. The fleeing soul was arrested in mid career and sent back to its earthly house. The child revived and the mother received her living son from the hands of the prophet. 'Now by this *I know* that thou art a man of God, and that the word in thy mouth is truth.' "

As this remarkable event had occurred not many miles from Carmel, no doubt the Shunammite woman had heard of it, and when the life had gone out from her own dear boy, the hope comes to her that the man of God could do for her what Elijah had done for the woman of Zarephath, and so she hurries to his side. He is the man who desired a double portion of the spirit of Elijah to rest on him. The God who heard Elijah's prayer can return this child to his mother also. Elisha's faith grasps the possibility. He commands his servant to take his staff, his prophetic symbol, and go to Shunem and lay it upon the face of the child. Moses waved his rod by means of which he performed his wonders, and which to him was the symbol of God's power and strength. By turning over his staff to his servant, he thereby commissions him to perform a prophetic act in his stead. He must not spend any time in needless salutations, for the Oriental methods are very elaborate and will waste much of his time. The exhortation to haste might have been to satisfy the mother, or with a faint hope that possibly the spirit had not yet fled, or if it had it could the sooner be reached and be brought back. The staff itself should be laid upon the face of the child, because death no doubt had fallen

upon him through the head. In the staff itself was no value save as it represented prophetic power. The mother refused to leave the feet of Elisha, but the servant hastened on his journey as commanded and laid the staff on the face of the dead child, but there came neither voice nor hearing. It did not seem to have any life-giving effect whatever. Some say this was not the fault of the servant, "inasmuch as Elisha, although he had given, it is true, the external symbol of his prophetical right and power, yet he had not considered that this right and power was a special gift of God which he might not freely delegate according to his own will, which he could not therefore communicate or transfer to his servant without further consideration."

Dr. Parker has a somewhat similar explanation of Gehazi's failure: "Gehazi was at this moment an undeveloped knave and what can he do with Elisha's staff or with God's sunlight? The bad man spoils whatever he touches. In the fall of man, everything of which man has to do must also fall. Virtue perished out of Elisha's staff; it became in the grip of Gehazi but a common stick. . . . The bad man draws a pall over the morning; he plucks the forbidden fruit, his eyes are opened, and he runs. Find him a cave where the sun is not, and you will find him a resting place for which his wicked heart is in quest. You cannot tell the lie, complete the hypocrisy, pluck the interdicted fruit, break all the commandments, and then look healthy in the face and smile really the smile of the soul. You may distort your features, you may pucker up the lineaments of your face as if trying to make a smile, but the laughter of the soul, the joy of the spirit, the delight of a pure and happy heart are impossible to the bad man. Thus we may be coming near to the reason why the staff failed. The staff is good, the hand that wielded it was bad; there was no true sympathy or connection between the hand and the staff; it was only in the hand, it was not in the heart. There was a merely physical grasp, there was no moral hold of the symbol of prophetic presence and power. Gehazi had already stolen from Naaman and already there had gone out from the court of heaven the decree which blanched him into a leper, white as snow."

Elisha evidently sent his staff by his servant with the expectation that it would be effectual to raise the dead. This was great faith in him, faith almost as strong as any that his great master

exemplified; for Elijah was the first to conceive the great thought that even the raising of the dead was not a thing too great for faith to ask. Elisha had that for a precedent, but he was the first to think that even his presence was not needful to this effect, that his faith might act thus mightily even at a distance by the mere instrumentality of his staff. Why not send the mantle, the symbol of his spiritual power? "This was deemed of higher price than the brocade robes of kings, and the older it grew the more precious it became. He would not like to trust this out of his own possession; and in point of fact, the Eastern inheritors of saintly matters never do let them go out of their immediate charge on any account whatever, and scarcely indeed will allow them to be separated from their persons. They even sleep in them."

Why then, we ask again, did the staff fail? The most reasonable answer seems to be the following: "Elisha did not *at first* mean to go himself to Shunem and for that reason sent his staff to supply the lack of his own presence. If he had intended to go himself, there would have been no need of sending his staff beforehand; and his haste to do so might have suggested to the ungodly a detraction of the miracle in the supposition that he apprehended the child would be too dead, before he came himself, to be revived at all. But after he had sent away the servant, his observation of the uneasiness of the mother—whom he now expected to go home satisfied—and her avowed determination not to leave him, which was a polite way of pressing him to go in person, induced him to alter his purpose and, with the kindness natural to him, to forego his own engagements at Carmel in order to satisfy her wishes by accompanying her to her forlorn home. It was probably in consequence of this change of plan that no response was made to the first claim of faith by means of the staff. *That* appeal was in fact superseded the moment he resolved to go in person, the Lord thus reserving for the personal intercession of his prophet the honor of this marvelous deed."

He starts with the mother and they meet Gehazi returning, who informs them the child was not awakened. Elisha enters his own chamber, finds the child upon his bed, and he is dead. It was a time for him to be alone with God. He had never undertaken such a work before. "He went in, therefore, and shut the door upon them twain, and prayed unto the Lord." Nothing so readily

reaches the arm of Jehovah and thereby controls the universe as the effectual prayer of his saints. "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence and the violent taketh it by force." A holy boldness can almost accomplish impossibilities. "And he went up, and lay upon the child, and put his mouth upon his mouth, and his eyes upon his eyes, and his hands upon his hands: and he stretched himself upon the child; and the flesh of the child waxed warm." He walked up and down the room, overcome with the emotions which looked for and waited for the complete answer to his prayer. Once more he stretches himself upon the child, and the latter gave signs of returning respiration and opened his eyes. The prophet's faith was equal to the occasion and God honored it. He called the woman and said to her, "Take up thy son." She came in, fell to the floor in token of thanksgiving for the wonderful blessing brought to her, took her son and went out. Again is her heart rejoiced.

"The man of God came forth and led the child
Unto his mother and went on his way;
And he was there—her beautiful, her own,
Living, and smiling on her—with his arms
Folded about her neck and his warm breath
Breathing upon her lips, and in her ear
The music of his gentle voice once more."

Elisha comes and goes about his prophetic work, and no doubt often tarries at this home as he had hitherto done, enjoys the association of this family, and witnesses the joy which has again come into the household through the recovery of this lost child. There comes a time when the prophet learns from Jehovah that a famine will be brought on the land which will last for seven years, and he informs this woman advising her to go where she will find it most convenient to support herself. It is more than likely that her husband, her chief reliance in a time of distress, has died, and that she is now a widow. She seems to have chosen the land of the Philistines, which was near to her, and because the plain along the sea may not have suffered as much as the mountain district. This incident shows that the prophet had kept in mind her generous hospitality to himself and he wished to reciprocate it. The seven years have gone and the woman comes back to find that, in her absence, her grain fields have been occupied by another. In early

times and especially in Oriental countries, kings were a kind of patriarchs to their people and much more accessible than in our Western world and our later times. The meanest of the subjects, if he had a cause of complaint, might approach the king and lay his case before him. This woman and her son visit the king to pour into his own ear the wrong that has been done them. In II. Samuel 14:4 we read, "And when the woman of Tekoah spake to the king, she fell on her face to the ground, and did obeisance, and said, Help, O king." And in II. Kings 6:26, we are told again, "And as the king of Israel was passing by upon the wall, there cried a woman unto him, saying, Help, my lord, O king." When the petitioner herself stands before the king, he is in position to know the facts in the case.

Once before she had declined the prophet's intercession before the king, but now she was in a position where it would be a value to her. The king had witnessed many acts of Elisha, which had forced from him a recognition of the prophet's work. But there were other things just as remarkable which he had learned by public rumor and which he desires to know more about from some reliable source. To whom should he so readily apply as to the servant who had been with him in his journeys, and who knew the most important events of this remarkable life? Among the most wonderful of these was the story of the Shunammite woman and the raising of her child from the dead. While Gehazi was in the act of relating this story, the mother and son appeared before the king to claim their property. When the servant saw them, he said to the king, "This is the woman of whom I have just been telling you, and this is the son whom Elisha raised to life." The woman tells her story, and the king was so carried away with her remarkable history in connection with the prophet, that for the sake of the latter he restored to her the property she had lost, and more even than she could have expected, for she received not only her land, "but all the fruit of the fields since the day she had left until now."

The lesson of this woman's life is a lesson of hospitality—the receiving of strangers into her home and giving them entertainment. All nations and peoples have practiced this to a greater or lesser extent, but it has been more conspicuous with some than with others. With the Greeks, it was under the special protection

of religion, and one of Jupiter's names indicated that its rights were under his guardianship. All guests and poor people were special objects of care to the gods. It has been a peculiar characteristic of Oriental people. When an Arab arrives at a village, he dismounts at the house of some one known to him, and says, "I am your guest." The host receives the traveler, sets before him his supper of bread and milk, and if rich takes care of his horse also. If the traveler is not acquainted with any one he alights at any place he chooses, fastens his horse, smokes his pipe, and awaits until the master bids him welcome and offers him the evening meal. In the morning he pursues his journey, making no other return than "God be with you." This was made almost necessary in early times from the fact that where the population is thinly scattered over a wide extent of country and traveling comparatively infrequent, public houses of accommodation would be hard to find and yet the traveler needs shelter and support. The master of the house may himself want similar kindness, so he is prompt to open his door to the tired wayfarer who may need his help. They are not usually over-burdened, for travelers are not numerous. When they do come they are full of news, of things true and wonderful, which in a sparsely settled country will be more than a fair equivalent for all that they have received.

The Bible records refer to this commendable custom in terms of high appreciation. As Abraham sat in his tent door, he saw three men approaching, and without waiting for them to ask him, "he ran to meet them and bowed himself and asked permission to have water brought, and their feet bathed, and some food for their bodies, and they should go on their way," and they consented to his proposal. When they reached Sodom, Lot invites them in to tarry for the night, and to wash their feet, and they shall rise up early and go on their way. When they apparently declined, he pressed them the more and they entered in and he made them a feast. When the servant of Abraham was at the well, Rebekah said to him, "We have both straw and provender, and room to lodge in." The priest of Midian sends out his daughters to find the man who had filled their troughs with water that he may "eat bread with them." The Levite is cared for by an old man who says to him, "Let all thy wants be upon me, only lodge not in the street." Express promises were made for the exercise of this grace among the

Jewish people. "If a stranger sojourn with thee in your land, ye shall not vex him." "And the stranger and the fatherless and the widow which are within thy gates shall come and eat and be satisfied." At their great national festivals, hospitality was liberally practiced, as long as the state retained its identity. On these occasions no inhabitant of Jerusalem considered his home his own. Every house swarmed with strangers, yet this unbounded hospitality could not furnish accommodations in the house for all who stood in need of it, but a large proportion of visitors had to be content with such shelter as tents could afford.

The primitive Christians considered one principal part of their duty to consist in showing hospitality to strangers. Peter commands them "to use hospitality one to another without grudging." Paul teaches Timothy that a bishop must be "given to hospitality." Titus is instructed to be "a lover of hospitality." On the day of Pentecost "neither said any of them that aught of which of the things he possessed was his own but he had all things common." The early Christians were hospitable to all, but especially to those who were of the faith. Believers scarcely ever traveled without letters of commendation which procured for them a favorable reception wherever the name of Jesus Christ was known. Some suppose that two minor Epistles of John were such letters. "Among themselves Christians called each other brethren and this fraternal name was no mere empty word. They lived as brothers. The kiss with which they greeted each other at the celebration of the Holy Supper was no empty form; the church was in reality one family, all its members children of one Heavenly Father. Each served the other, each prayed for all the rest. They had all things in common. The church interested itself first in those of its members who needed help in any way, and then it went beyond them to embrace in its love those who stood without."

Hospitality was a duty enjoined during the days of chivalry. Says the historian, "Then it was in Great Britain charity of manners reigned in all; noble dames and gentle knights placed on the top of their castles a helmet as a sign that all good knights and worthy ladies traveling that way should enter as freely into their castles as if they were their own." Handsome presents were given to the guests; "but the courtesy they learned in those castles was above all riches; no spirit of discord or peevishness was ever

allowed in these knights toward one another. Their manners displayed every kind of friendship and of good will. . . . Nothing was small or despicable in the eyes of the knight if it comprehended the welfare of the individual; if he in his voyage or expedition receive the hospitality of the meanest person, gratitude would never suffer him to consider that person but as a noble and generous benefactor; he declared himself forever his knight and swore to renounce all the glory that could be proposed to him to acquit himself of the debt to defend, protect, and succor him in time of need."

"That phase of hospitality which the example of the Shunammite specially emphasizes for us, is that which is to be shown to God's prophets, the ministers of the everlasting gospel. These are men divinely commissioned to carry his truth to a lost and ruined world. From the very necessities of the case they must be poor men, for they have no time to make money. They are to-day and have been from the very beginning dependent upon others. Those before the days of Elisha, as well as those since, have been supported by the gifts of the people. The Levites who specially waited upon the services of the sanctuary, were supported by the tithes of the people. When Christ came and the new dispensation was ushered in, not only was he himself sustained by contributions received from others, but he especially instructed his disciples that as they went forth they should take neither gold, nor silver, nor purse, nor script, but their wants should be supplied by the people to whom they ministered, for the laborer was worthy of his hire and they who preached the gospel should live of the gospel. When they were kindly received by the people they should say peace to the house, but if turned away, they should shake off the dust of their feet against them. The records of the planting of Christianity of the early settlement of this land, show how these men of God traveled long distances with scarcely any road, through dense forests, with very meager resources, but the children of God welcomed them to their humble log cabins and freely shared with them the very best they had. In this manner the truth of God reached men and took hold of their hearts, and then arose the church to bless the community with its teaching and worship, whose spire ever pointed upward to a haven of rest for all those who were found faithful."

Queen Esther---the Successful Petitioner

"There is but one inference, one deduction to be drawn from the beautiful story of Esther and Mordecai, and that is the rule of God Almighty on this earth. No matter whether he rules through natural causes or supernaturally, still he is the great ultimate power to whom all things are subservient, and all people personally accountable. In the narrative before us, his name is not even mentioned; yet how plain his hand! Miracles do not more impressively show divine interference, than the course things were made to take in the court of Ahasuerus. How signally good was made to come out of evil! If we had no other record of God's dealings with man than the Book of Esther, we should know that the Almighty controls human affairs. Mordecai and Esther were signal instruments of his power from first to last; alike they show his benevolence and lovingkindness. The fate of Haman is a crushing demonstration of divine judgment. He was on the threshold of success, and yet in a moment the hand of justice smote him. To all mortal calculations, it was morally certain that the Jews would be exterminated in the Persian Empire; and yet they were saved by a great deliverance as marked as when the Israelites escaped the pursuing hosts of Pharaoh. The same almighty Hand that led his people through the Red Sea, rescued them from the malignant vengeance of a powerful minister. Who turned the heart of a mighty monarch to a Jewish maiden and a Jewish captive? Who exalted Esther to a queenly rank, and Mordecai to exalted station?"

—*Dr. John Lord.*

Queen Esther—the Successful Petitioner

THE Book of Esther is one of the most interesting gems in Old Testament history. The story is a remarkable illustration of God's hand in the guiding and directing of individuals and of nations. It occurs at a somewhat dark period in Jewish history. The chosen people had been led into captivity, and were scattered up and down among the nations of the earth, without a temple in which to worship, with their priesthood broken down, and their religion, to them, only a bright memory of the past. In this scattered and depressed condition, a conspiracy is entered into by a haughty man, who is influenced by personal pique to destroy this whole nation, and this man is unwittingly aided in his murderous purpose by the consent of the king. This dreadful massacre is prevented by the prudence and courage of a Jewish girl. The story reads like a romance, a tale of the Arabian Nights, and yet down to our own day the memory of this girl is carefully preserved, showing that the story is not a dream of the imagination but a genuine reality. Wherever the Jews are found to-day on the fourteenth and fifteenth of Adar, corresponding to our March, the feast of Purim is kept, which is to commemorate the preservation of the Jews from the threatened enmity of Haman. As introductory to this feast, the Book of Esther is read through, and whenever the name of Haman is reached, the congregation stamp on the floor and cry out, "Let his name be blotted out; the name of the wicked shall rot." In the days of Josephus he tells us, "Even now all the Jews that are in the habitable earth keep these days as festivals and send portions to one another."

The king, Ahasuerus, who is here mentioned, is supposed to be Xerxes of Herodotus, and the time of this story is before the expedition of that monarch against Greece. "The king who scourged and fettered the sea; who beheaded his engineers because the elements destroyed their bridge over the Hellespont; who so ruthlessly slew the eldest son of Pythius because his father besought him to leave him as the sole support of his declin-

ing years; who dishonored the remains of the valiant Leonidas, and beguiled the shame of his defeat by such a curse of sensuality that he publicly offered a reward for the invention of a new pleasure—is just the despot to divorce his queen because she would not expose herself to the gaze of drunken revelers; is just the despot to devote a whole people, his subjects, to indiscriminate massacre; and by way of preventing, to restore them the right of self-defense and thus to sanction their slaughtering thousands of his other subjects."

It is at the court of such a monarch, proud, vain, ostentatious, tyrannical, that the story opens. In the third year of his reign he gave to the princes and nobles who came from all parts of his vast empire, consisting of one hundred and twenty-seven provinces, a magnificent feast lasting one hundred and eighty days, and this one was followed by one of seven days to the people of the capital, and held in the garden of the palace. The precise occasion for such a feast is not known. "Some think it was to commemorate the dedication of Susa, as one of the royal capitals. Those who identify the king with Xerxes suppose that we have here the festivity in which the king sought after his return, to drown in himself and others the keen sense of his disgrace. Perhaps the fact that the feast was held in the third year of the king's reign may receive an illustration from the customs of China, where the three years' mourning for the deceased king precludes any public festivity, but on the expiring of which the reigning monarch holds a great and sumptuous festival to celebrate his inauguration."

On the last seven days of the feast, the palace is thrown open to the populace of Shushan. We are introduced to the garden of the palace, whose couches and tesselated floor are magnificently described. "The hangings are white, green, and blue, fastened with cords of fine linen and purple, to silver rings and pillars of marble." The beds or divans upon which the guests recline, are "of gold and silver upon a pavement of red and blue and black and white marble."

"The feast took place, not in the interior of any hall, but out of doors, in tents erected in one of the courts of the palace, such as we may easily fancy existed in front of either the eastern or western court of the great central building." There are still in

existence, ruins of this city composed of hillocks of earth and rubbish, covered with broken pieces of brick and colored tile. The city is a gloomy wilderness, infested by lions, hyenas, and other beasts of prey. Amid the ruins of Persepolis, also a Persian capital, are the foundations and remains of a magnificent temple which would well illustrate the story and give an idea of the extraordinary architectural splendor of the palace. "Portals still standing bear figures of animals fifteen feet high, closely resembling the Assyrian bulls of Nineveh. . . . The walls are more superbly decorated with sculptures, representing colossal warriors with spears, gigantic bulls, combats with wild beasts, processions, and the like. . . . The Great Hall of Xerxes, perhaps the largest and most magnificent structure the world has ever seen, is computed to have been in rectangular form and to have covered about two and one-half acres."

This is a magnificent occasion, and guests begin to crowd the hall. Royal wine of fine quality, such as Persian kings would drink, and in such quantity as would correspond with the wealth and grandeur of the king, flowed freely. Golden goblets passed from hand to hand. The tables are loaded with luxuries. The guests, by a courageous and vigorous carousing, are expected to show their appreciation of the liberal hospitality of the king, and at the same time evince their ability to do something in their drinking worthy of the royal table. While this feast of revelry, this drunken carousal was taking place on the part of the men, the queen was elsewhere banqueting the women, and thus helping more and more to bring into view the royal majesty and magnificence of the king. Usually the queen ate with her husband, and even in greater feasts was not always excluded. At this time she was compelled to remain away, since she was giving the entertainment to the ladies. This was probably given in her own apartments, which were in the royal residence or in some other dwelling, placed at her disposal for this festive occasion. To permit the participation of women in all the feasts of the men, would certainly not have been desirable, since it was a mixed company.

During six days of the feast the hilarity ran high. On the seventh day, when the king and all had well drunk, he is disposed to grant a still greater favor to his guests, and one which he would not have been willing to grant had he been in a sober mood.

The queen's name was Vashti, signifying a beautiful woman. He orders this beautiful woman to array herself in her jeweled robes and diadems, and with unveiled face to present herself at the feast, in the presence of these intoxicated nobles. According to the ancient customs, it was as unbecoming and indecent a thing, as if a husband to-day should propose to his wife to exhibit her naked person in the presence of others. When we reflect that by such an act she would become the gazing-stock of a drunken company, and make a show of herself to lascivious eyes, we are not surprised that she had respect to her own position and dignity. As many others of her sex have done, she chose death rather than dishonor. Great as was her astonishment that such a command should be sent to her, it was just as astonishing to others that any one, and especially a woman, would disobey the command of even a drunken monarch. Had she been wise and judicious she might have found some way to have rendered obedience, without sacrificing her honor, but we cannot blame her for the step taken. This refusal was sent to the king in the presence of his lords, and we have no doubt it sobered some of them completely.

This insult to the king, in the very presence of the representatives of his empire, cannot be tolerated. More than this, it comes very close home to each one of these men. If it goes abroad, as it is sure to do, that the queen herself had indignantly refused to obey even the king of kings, what had they and other princes of the land to expect in their own families from the example, if this high crime were not properly punished? "The naïve account of the counsel of the king and princes about this first stand for woman's rights—their fear that the example might infect other wives with a like spirit and weaken the authority of husbands—is a delightful specimen of ancient simplicity. It shows us that the male sex, with all their force of physical mastery, hold everywhere, even in the undeveloped states of civilization, an almost even-handed conflict with those subtler and more ethereal forces which are ever at the disposal of women. It appears that the chief counselors and mighty men of Persia could scarcely hold their own with their wives, and felt as if the least toleration would set them all out in open rebellion." How we smile at the child-like simplicity of these men, in recommending

the issuing of a royal decree in all languages of this great empire, "that every man should bear rule in his own house." We cannot think of a more amusing thing than this in all history. We may imagine, if not the surprise, at least the general merriment, which must have pervaded every one of the "one hundred and twenty-seven provinces," when this statesman-like decree was promulgated. No doubt it gave great encouragement to men whose wives were on the point of "despising" their husbands, for by such decree they should be kept in proper subjection. Vashti is deposed by the concurrent voice of all the princes of the Medes and Persians. The day of her highest joy becomes the day of her misfortune.

After some months have elapsed the wrath of the king is appeased, and he seems to have regretted the step which he took in dethroning the queen. His attendants see that he is troubled, and they do not know but his wrath may yet be directed against the counselors who had advised this severe measure. To prevent anything of this kind they devise a plan to secure a wife in Vashti's stead. "All the beautiful virgins through all the one hundred and twenty-seven provinces are caught, caged, and sent traveling towards Shushan, and delivered over to the keeping of the chief eunuch, like so many birds and butterflies, waiting their turn to be sent in to the king. Among those who came is a fair young Jewess, named Esther, whose parents were dead, and who had been reared by her Uncle Mordecai, who is a porter about the place. It was not known that she was of Jewish parentage, and for some reason her uncle wished her not to disclose the fact. He desired to have her compete with the maidens from India and Ethiopia, the ruddy damsels from Babylon, the beauties from Circassia and Persia, that she might glorify her race and be of service to them."

It may have been some time after the king's decree was first issued, but in due time Esther was admitted into the number of the applicants. She struck the eunuch who had charge of the parties, as a young woman of surpassing beauty. It was probably the reflection of a soul through her beautiful face, that first charmed him and afterwards charmed the king. For twelve months they were under the care and direction of the chief eunuch so he could fit them to go before the ruler. He expedited

matters so as to prepare her as early as possible. Day by day Mordecai would walk by the court of the women's house to learn from those who had her in charge as to the progress of her preparation. When the time came to appear before the king, many of them decked themselves with necklaces, bracelets, ear-rings, and such as these, for this was the event of their lives; but when Esther's time came, she deferred to the judgment of the eunuch, who, no doubt, knew the taste of the king. The king is charmed by her appearance. "He does not know that she is a Jewess, but her exquisite beauty, her unparalleled modesty, her symmetrical form, her glorious face, where her high intellectuality and still higher moral purity blend, win his heart. And while he hears the soft tones of her voice and feels the power of her dewy eyes, rejecting all others, with his own hand he places the gorgeous coronet upon her splendid brow and makes her queen instead of Vashti." The marriage was celebrated in due form and a feast was made in honor of the new queen.

During the year when Esther was in the place of preparation, or soon after her elevation, Mordecai did the king a great favor. While walking about the palace he hears of a conspiracy on the part of two chamberlains to murder the king. Mordecai, through Esther, gave the king notice thereof. The matter was investigated by the proper authorities and found to be correct. Conspiracies inside the palace were ordinary occurrences in Persia. Xerxes was subsequently murdered by the captain of the guard and one of the chamberlains. The two men above referred to were put to death, and the events were recorded in the chronicles of the empire. It was a Persian custom also to insert into these chronicles the names of those who had deserved well of the king.

There is another turn of the kaleidoscope and a certain adventurer, named Haman, rises suddenly to power and becomes prime minister to the king. All the royal court officers were expected to bow the knee before Haman and to prostrate themselves, for such was the king's arrangement. Mordecai refused to show any such honor to this upstart, who was inflated with his own self-conceit. He stood so near the queen that possibly he may have felt himself safe in indulging in quiet contempt of this favorite of the king. He most likely did not refuse from any personal hostility or any special stubbornness. It was no doubt because of

his character as a Jew. As the Persians regarded their king as a divinity and paid him divine honors, it is argued by some that in Haman, as chief officer, it was doubtless intended to manifest a reflection of the divine dignity of the king, and therefore that bowing the knee on the part of Mordecai would be idolatry. But the fact that Haman was an Agagite and Amalekite seems a sufficient explanation. That a rigid and independent Jew should refuse the marks of reverent homage to one of that accursed and abominated race, seems in the highest degree natural and probable.

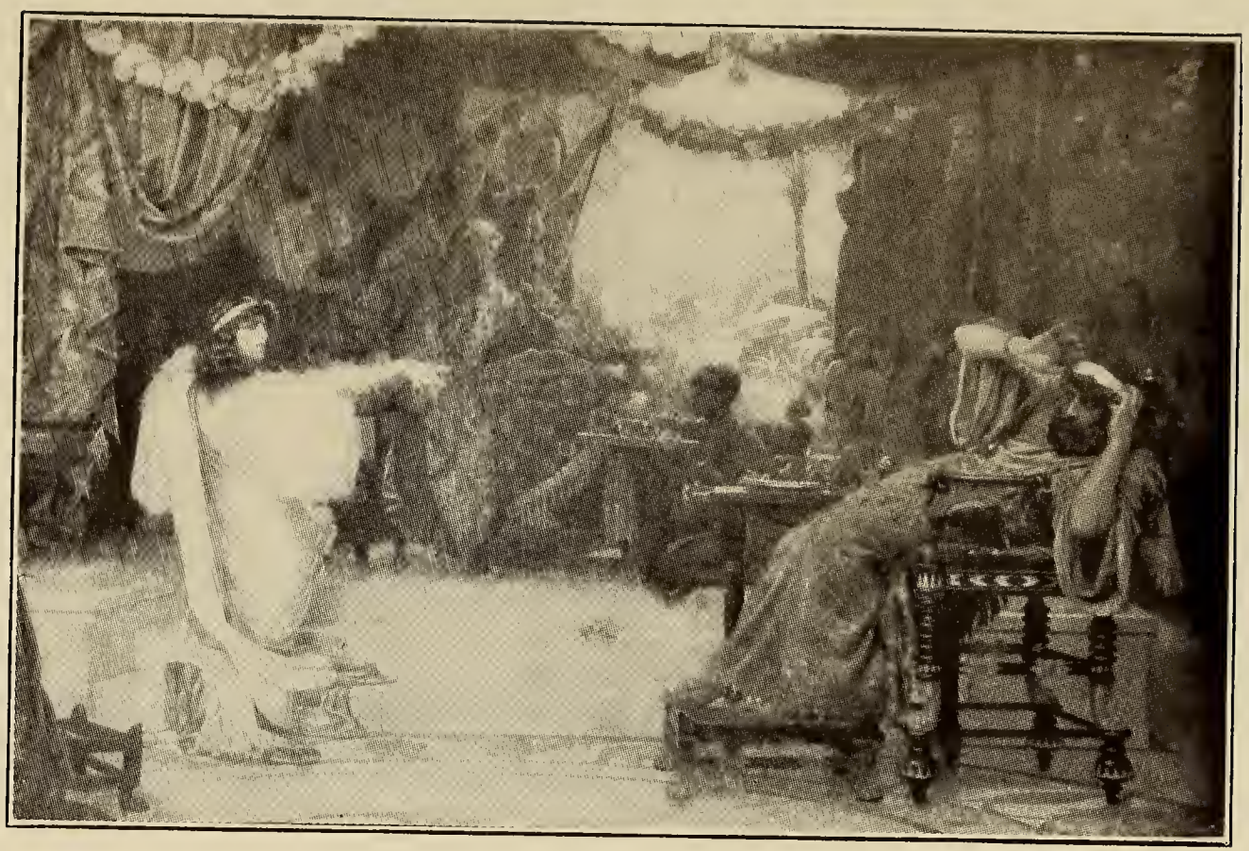
At first Haman does not seem to pay much attention to it, but having been named by others who are ever anxious to cultivate the good will of those in power, he notices one remarkable form that never bows when he approaches. Whether on foot in the gorgeous apparel of a royal favorite or riding upon the richly decked Arabian charger with his retinue of attendants, at one gate he always finds a man standing like marble while the others kneel. It finally irritates and maddens him. It is the more aggravating when he learns that he belongs to the hated Jews who slew his forefather Agag. "Had Mordecai been any other than a Jew, the favorite would doubtless have been content to wreak his vengeance upon the man, whose quiet course provoked him so greatly; but to learn that this man belonged to the very nation which had vowed the extermination of Amalek, opened a wider scope to his vengeance. He could not but call to mind the wondrous passages of the ancient hatred between them, and which even the present demeanor of Mordecai showed to be inextinguishable; and he would then remember that this hated and hating nation was, as it seemed, completely under his hand, being dispersed as captives and tributary subjects through the realm in which he had almost absolute rule. It is under this view, explicable that the bold and murderous idea, which appeared to him a grand one no doubt, should occur to him of destroying the whole of this nation in one day. The slight from Mordecai was simply the occasion, the exciting cause, the key that opened the gates to a sweeping flood of old hatreds and vengeances."

Haman, having formed his plan, must secure the consent of the king, and the ease with which it was done and the lives of tens of thousands of his very best citizens placed at the disposal of this man, is one of the most shocking examples of Oriental des-

potisms on record. He says: "There is a nation scattered abroad throughout all the provinces of the king's kingdom, and their laws are diverse from all people, neither keep they the king's laws, therefore it is not for the king's profit to suffer them. If it please the king let it be written that they may be destroyed, and I will pay ten thousand talents of silver to the hands of them that have charge of the business, to bring it into the king's treasury." If the king had not been willfully blind or drunk, the extravagant sum which this man offered to pay to the royal revenue should have awakened his suspicion that this man was not looking so much after the public good as he was the gratification of a private vengeance. If it were not best for the public good that these men should live, there was no occasion that the prime minister should pay so much out of his private funds for a public blessing.

In our day we talk much of the contempt and disregard shown to women among the Oriental nations, but in this case men were treated no better than women. In fact, human beings were cheap. The destruction of faithful citizens was arranged for in as easy and off-hand manner as a farmer would dispose of his cattle or his sheep. Until Christianity came with its uplifting power, mankind had no proper conception of the worth of a human being. "There was no prevalent sense in men of an essential primitive dignity belonging to their nature. In the common understanding of things, man had sprung from the earth, and the grasshopper was his fitting badge. From rocks and trees and swampy places some had come, those born of the marsh having legs like serpents. Heroes themselves, and even the gods according to Pindar, had drawn their breath from the same mother. The first man had lived as insignificant emmets in the excavated earth or in the sunless depth of caverns."* When Christ came he taught men of their divine origin and therefore their true worth. "No doubt many a rude fisherman of Galilee heard his words with a heart bounding and scarce able to keep in his bosom, went home a new man with a legion of angels in his breast, and from that day lived a divine life and beautiful. To them the word of Jesus must have sounded divine, like the music of their home sung out in the sky

*Storr's "Divine Evidences of Christianity," p. 73.



ESTHER DENOUNCING HAMAN

and heard in a distant land beguiling toil of its weariness, pain of its sting, affliction of despair."†

The king seemed to be entirely satisfied with the arrangement, and gave his seal ring to Haman, which not only empowered him to make the proclamation already asked for, but to issue any other suitable decree which he found necessary. He at once arranges to have the necessary proclamation made. Says the story, "The king's scribes were called on the thirteenth day of the first month, and there was written according to all that Haman had commanded, and the letters were sent by post unto all the provinces, to destroy, to kill, and to cause to perish all Jews, both old and young, little children and women, in one day of the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar, to take the spoil of them for a prey. The posts went out being hastened by the king's commandment, and *the king and Haman sat down to drink, but the city of Shushan was perplexed.*"

When Mordecai heard, as he did no doubt from some friend of Haman, of the terrible catastrophe which was to come upon his people, he rent his clothes and covered himself with sackcloth and ashes, and went into the midst of the city crying out in his distress with a loud and bitter cry. He came even to the king's gate, but he could not go any farther in his sackcloth. No sight or sound of human suffering must disturb the peaceful quiet of the royal court. It was not his own personal danger that alarmed him, but it was the calamity threatening the whole Jewish people. Not only here in Shushan but wherever this decree went, there was the same desolation and the people gave vent to their distress by putting on sackcloth and sitting in ashes.

Resting in her luxurious apartments, listening to the music of the birds and the splash of the fountains, away from the cares and perplexities of busy life, the queen knew nothing of the murderous decree which had just gone forth against her people. While the officers about the court most likely did not know the nationality of Esther, they knew of her relations to Mordecai and they would inform her of all they knew concerning him. She learned that her kinsman was in sackcloth, and she sent him costly garments that he might again stand in the gates of the king; but he

†"Discourses on Religion," Theodore Parker, p. 305.

refused to wear them for he wanted a private interview. She sends her chief chamberlain to learn of the cause of his distress, and Mordecai sent to her a copy of the decree with an account of how and by whom obtained, and he enjoins upon her that she go before the king and make supplication for her people. Esther hears the report and returns the following answer: "All the king's servants . . . do know, that whosoever, whether man or woman, shall come unto the king into the inner court, who is not called, there is one law . . . to put him to death, except such to whom the king shall hold out the golden sceptre, that he may live: but I have not been called to come in unto the king these thirty days."

She has been married now about five years. Knowing herself to be one of the out-lawed race, she does not know but that the king's heart may have been set against her by the enemies of her people, and therefore he has not summoned her for thirty days. This would make her situation a dangerous one. Mordecai manifests unusual anxiety for the welfare of his people and sends in reply to her a sterner message: "Think not with thyself that thou shalt escape in the king's house, more than all the Jews. For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place, but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"

"Mourning within the palace, in her room,
The young queen sits alone. A soft perfume
Mingles its odors with the evening breeze,
As steals it through the garden's fragrant trees,
Ere fanning her white brow. Soft music is
Upon the air—the wild bird's joyous notes
Are gushing forth. A jeweled coronet
Is gleaming close beside her. Not as yet
Have tears bedimmed its lustre, nor has care
Made that light crown too wearisome to bear.
And yet her brow
Is sad; and in calm, motionless despair
Her small, white hands are clasped. Why mourns she now?
'Tis for her nation, heaven's peculiar trust
In years long past, now bowing to the dust—
Condemned to die to gratify the pride
Of one weak man; and she, the monarch's bride,
Is of the number, though *he knows it not.*"

Esther hears this pitiful appeal from her kinsman, this call, it may be, to martyrdom. Possibly she has been placed in this high position that she might be a blessing to her nation. Conscious of her danger, but strong in the justice of her cause, she determines to go forward and sends this answer: "Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day: I also and my maidens will fast likewise; and so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law: and *if I perish, I perish.*" And Mordecai did as Esther enjoined upon him.

She fasts two weary days and nights. Her grief has made inroads upon her beauty. She washes away as far as she can all traces of suffering, braids her hair more carefully than usual, and arrays herself in apparel that becomes her radiant beauty. She carries in her hands, maybe, the salvation of her own nation, and nothing is too trifling which will help to secure that. She enters the doorway, which to enter is to forfeit life. As the king hears the rustling of her dress, he turns around to see who has broken in upon his quiet, and beholds his own wife. She is silent, but her unspoken appeal reaches his heart, and he holds out the golden scepter. He said unto her, "What wilt thou, Queen Esther? and what is thy request? it shall be even given thee to the half of the kingdom." He knew that no little thing would lead her to assume such a risk. She is too much excited possibly to open her heart and press her petition. Maybe she wants to know the power of her influence over this man before she tells her tale of woe. She modestly asks that the king and Haman would come that day to a banquet in the queen's apartments, and it was so arranged.

At the banquet the king again asked her to make known her request. She delays her answer and asks both the king and his minister to come to a banquet again on the morrow and she will then make known her wish. Haman is very much flattered by this attention on the part of the queen. As he passed by Mordecai, who would show him no honor, he was full of indignation. As he goes home to his family, he gives an account of the honors which the king has conferred upon him, and that even the queen had extended to him an invitation which had been proffered to no other. All this, however, availed him nothing, he said, so long as he saw Mordecai the Jew sitting in the king's gate. His skillful

wife sees a way out of his difficulty. "Let a gallows be made of fifty cubits high, and to-morrow speak thou unto the king, that Mordecai may be hanged thereon: then go thou in merrily with the king unto the banquet." The thing was agreeable to Haman and he caused the gallows to be erected.

On that night the king could not sleep. He was in his royal bedchamber and silence pervaded the palace, but sleep had departed from him. He cannot think what terrible emergency induced his wife, timid woman as she was, to jeopardize her life. He calls an attendant to read to him the prosy records of the kingdom which probably on some former occasion had induced sleep. As they were read his ear caught the account of the preservation of his life by the prompt action of Mordecai. "What honor hath been done to Mordecai for this?" he inquired, and the servant announced that nothing had been done. The king is surprised at his own forgetfulness which seemed like gross ingratitude. The thing was in his mind, and in the early morning, hearing Haman in the outer court, he gives orders to have him admitted. Haman's mind is full of the gallows and of Mordecai, and with the king's permission he will soon have the hated Jew out of the way. The king is also thinking of Mordecai, but with a different end in view. The king inquires of his minister, "What shall be done with the man whom the king delighteth to honor?" Haman could think of no one whom the king would so likely honor as himself, so he proposes a magnificent scheme. The man shall be clothed in the king's royal robes, wear the king's crown, be mounted on the king's horse, and be led through the streets by one of the king's chief counselors proclaiming, "This is the man whom the king delighteth to honor." "Then said the king, Make haste to do even so as thou hast said unto Mordecai, the Jew, that sitteth in the king's gate. Let nothing fail of all thou hast spoken." There was no other way but for Haman to go forth and fulfill the king's commands, but what pleasure and comfort he took in the performance can well be imagined. At noon the king, Haman, and Esther are again at banquet. There is still one hope for him: Mordecai must die by the execution of a decree which destroys his nation.

It is not at all certain that the king had ever taken the trouble to find out the nationality of the people whom he had given over to destruction, just as he had not taken the trouble hitherto to

reward the man who had so graciously saved his life. He did not know of the rankling passion of envy that was eating in Haman's heart, and had no thought possibly of the bitterness of the duty which he had placed upon him. Mordecai is led through the streets in a manner which showed to all that the king would put upon him special honor. Haman having performed this very unpleasant duty, returns to his home covered with shame after such a humiliating public exposure. When he recounted to his wife the terrible disappointments which that day had crossed his pathway, she offered him poor consolation when she said, "If Mordecai be of the seed of the Jews before whom thou hast begun to fall, thou shalt not prevail against him, but shalt surely fall before him."

The time has come for the second banquet, and the king and Haman are once more in a secluded apartment, dining with the queen. After the events that have just occurred, no doubt Haman came with a much more subdued manner than he had manifested before. Once more the king asks, "What is thy request, Queen Esther?" The time has come when she is sufficiently wrought up to give the answer, with a dignity and earnestness becoming her position and the interests of her people, whom in the providence of God she had been called to save. She says: "If I have found favour in thy sight, O king, and if it please the king, let my life be given me at my petition, and my people at my request: For we are sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be slain, and to perish. If we had been sold for bondmen and bondwomen, I had held my tongue." The king is astounded at such information, as his excited reply plainly indicates, "Who is he, and where is he, that durst presume in his heart to do so?" asks the aroused king. The queen answers, "The adversary and enemy is this wicked Haman." The man trembled at this revelation of his skillful, wicked scheming, as he had good reason to do. The king's anger was aroused, and to quiet his agitation he rushed out into the palace garden. For the first time he seems to see the blunder which he had made in thus ordering the destruction of the race to which his wife belonged. He has already sent orders to all the provinces to destroy the people of whom his wife is one, and for whom she is now interceding at the risk of her own life. The king is guilty, because of such cruel negligence, but his prime

minister must take the consequences of having induced him to take such a rash step. Haman reads in the angry face of the king his impending doom. There is no help for him, unless the queen may be touched by his condition. In the absence of the king, and, paled with fear, he falls at the feet of Esther upon the couch where she rests, and as the king comes back in anger from the garden and sees him there, he exclaims, "Will he force the queen also before me in the house?" As he ceased speaking they covered Haman's face, a sign that he must pay the penalty of his wickedness with his life. An attendant, who no doubt was anxious to keep in favor with the king and queen, said, "Behold also the gallows fifty cubits high, which Haman had made for Mordecai, who had spoken good for the king, standeth in the house of Haman." The king answered, "Hang him thereon." Josephus adds very appropriately to this record the following statement: "From hence I cannot forbear to admire God, and to learn hence his wisdom and justice, not only in punishing the wickedness of Haman, but in so disposing it that he should undergo the very same punishment which he had contrived for another. As also because he thereby teaches this lesson, that what mischiefs any one prepares against another, he without knowing it first contrives it against himself."

The king is anxious to undo as far as possible his former mischief. The decree which has already gone out cannot be countermanded, for a law of the Medes and Persians cannot be altered, but its cruel results may in part be avoided. Esther reveals to the king the relationship existing between herself and Mordecai, and the latter is made prime minister. The signet ring which Haman had used to seal official documents is now given to Mordecai. The queen beseeches that as far as possible the letters of the king be countermanded. She is authorized to issue a new edict to the governors, and sign it with the king's seal, and it will be just as authoritative as the one previously sent. Mordecai prepared the edict, signed it with the king's seal, and sent it to all the governors of the hundred and twenty-seven provinces by the most rapid means of conveyance which he had at his disposal. "As the case then stood, the governors and other authorities were not obligated to assist in the preparation for the destruction of the Jews, nor yet

to obstruct or hinder the resistance which the Jews would offer to their assailants. They could leave the case to the people, whether they would attack the Jews and risk a conflict, and they need not afterwards punish such Jews as had slain their enemies. More than this, the Jews were permitted to assemble and arm for their common defense in advance, against all the assaults and reverses which might otherwise befall them."

The result of this new measure brings great joy to the people as well as great glory to Mordecai. He assumes the robes of state and assists the king in the government of his people. The people who were in terror for their lives have been made to rejoice. Man proposes, but God disposes, and he has once more interfered to protect his own. It was a time of great deliverance to many, and made so great an impression on the provinces that many of the people joined themselves to the Jews. On the great day of the decreed slaughter, "all the rulers and officers of the king helped the Jews because the fear of Mordecai fell upon them." The eventful day finally came. The Jews were prepared for any attack that should be made upon them. It was known the prime minister was a Jew, a friend of their race, and back of him stood the king and queen. In those two days of terror and blood there is no indication that any Jews fell; of their enemies five hundred fell in Shushan, and in all the provinces seventy-five hundred. They did not touch any of the property of the slain, although permitted by the king so to do. The second day assigned for the slaughter and the day following were days of exultation and joy. That day on which they had expected assault and pillage and blood was, by the wonderful overruling of Providence, a day of bloodless victory over their enemies; a day of feasting, of congratulations, and of all possible demonstrations of joy.

When Haman determined upon the destruction of this people, he concluded he must select an appropriate day; and so, after the manner of the Eastern people, he cast lots for an auspicious day, beginning with the first month of the year and going on day after day and month after month until he was driven to the thirteenth day of the very last month as the only auspicious time for the commencement of this dreadful massacre. By this means, between the issuing of the decree and the arrival of the fatal day eight

months intervened for the posts to carry the king's edict to the remotest provinces in the empire, and for every Jewish settlement everywhere to prepare to stand at bay against the men who would pursue them to the death. "We doubt not it was the Lord's doing, for the confusion of Haman and to accomplish the secret design of his provinces, that the lot was made to fix the time to the remotest possible period to be within the year; so that the execution was delayed for almost a complete year, affording time not only for the subversion of the plot at court, but for the arrival of the messengers who were dispatched with a counteracting decree. It is manifest that if the interval had been anything shorter, these could not have reached the remoter provinces of an empire which stretched from Judea to Ethiopia, in time to neutralize the execution of the first." The "feast of lots" became the Passover feast of the "dispersion." It preceded the Paschal feast by only a month, and to make the parallel complete was celebrated not on the thirteenth, the triumphant day, but on the fourteenth and fifteenth of Adar, corresponding to the fourteenth and fifteenth of the Paschal month Nisan.

The name of the author of this beautiful story cannot be determined with any certainty. He must have lived on the spot, for the details of the story are given so minutely. His reference to Persian names, life, history, and customs agree entirely with what comes to us from the Greek historians. Some think it was written by Mordecai, who had access to the annals of state. If not written by him, it may have been by his direction and under his eye. It was evidently the intention of the author to give a reason for the feast of Purim. The occasion of the feast would be a matter of great moment to the Jews, and would show that in the government of the world there is a justice which protects Judaism and preserves it amid the greatest dangers. Why the name of God should not be mentioned cannot be known, but there may have been some reason in their relation to Persian ideas and superstitions which seemed to make it best to omit it.

"Though his name be absent, God *himself* is there. We trace him at every step through this wonderful book and everywhere behold the leadings of his providence. To name one instance among many: What was it, or rather who was it, that kept the

king's eyes from slumber on a night big with the doom of the Hebrew nation? Who moved him to call for the chronicles of his reign and not to summon the tale-reciter or the minstrel to beguile his waking hours? Who moved the reader to open at that part which related to the service of Mordecai in disclosing a plot against the king's life? Who quickened the king's languid attention and interest, and stirred him to inquire what reward had been bestowed upon the man to whose fidelity he owed his life and crown? Who timed this so that this glow of kindly feeling towards Mordecai and this determination right royally to acknowledge his unrequited services, occurred at the very moment that Haman had arrived at the palace to ask leave to hang this very Mordecai upon a gallows fifty feet high, which he had caused already to be set up in the assumed conviction that the king would not refuse him so trifling a request, and little thinking that he himself was destined to swing high in air upon it? Who ordered it so, that coming with this errand in his mouth, he was only stopped from uttering it by an order to hasten to confer upon this Mordecai, with his own hands, the highest distinction the king could bestow upon the man he 'delighted to honor'? God not in the Book of Esther? If not, where is he? To our view, his glory—the glory of his goodness in caring for and shielding from harm his afflicted church—shines through every page."

We are often, without our choice, put into circumstances where we are compelled to do battle or to retreat; to do with our might the work before us or submit to inglorious defeat. Such occasions both test and develop our strength. Men and women who have blessed their race and honored God have all passed through such scenes, and have remembered with joy the day when an overruling Providence put their feet in such a pathway. No doubt Esther, in outshining all the daughters of the land and thus winning her way to the throne, delighted the heart of Mordecai, who was pleased that such honors should be conferred upon one of his own race and family. Perhaps in her own heart she rejoiced at this promotion; but scarcely had she received the desire of her heart, when she found herself in a very trying position. From no design or wish on her part, the well-being of her whole race seemed to hang upon her conduct. There appeared to be no other one that

could take her place. To recede was to consign her race to slaughter to gratify the pride of one wicked man. Her own life might be sacrificed with that of her race. To go forward promised but one ray of hope. Like a brave-hearted woman she took the risk and went forward saying, "If I perish, I perish." Thus are responsibilities thrust upon us which we do not seek, and we are put to bearing burdens through no effort of our own.

"Thanksgiving to the Lord of life—to him all praises be,
Who from the hands of evil men hath set his handmaid free;
All praise to him, before whose power the mighty are afraid,
Who takes the crafty in the snare which for the poor is laid.

"Sing, oh, my soul, rejoicingly, on evening's twilight calm;
Uplift the loud thanksgiving—pour forth the grateful psalm;
Let all dear hearts with me rejoice—as did the saints of old,
When of the Lord's good angel the rescued Peter told.

"And weep and howl, ye evil priests and mighty men of wrong,
The Lord shall smite the proud and lay his hand upon the throng.
Woe to the wicked rulers in his avenging hour,
Woe to the wolves who seek the flocks, to raven and devour.

"But let the humble ones arise—the poor in heart be glad;
And let the mourning ones again with robes of praise be glad;
For he who cooled the furnace, and smoothed the stormy wave,
And tamed the Chaldean lions, is mighty still to save."

Judith---the Deliverer

"Then Judith dared not look upon him more,
Lest she should lose her reason through her eyes;
And with her palms she covered up her eyes
To shut him out; but from that subtler sight
Within, she could not shut him, and so stood.
Then suddenly there fell upon her ear
The moan of children moaning in the streets,
And throngs of famished women swept her by,
Ringing their wasted hands, and all the woes
Of the doomed city pleaded at her heart.
As if she were within the very walls
These things she heard and saw. With hurried breath
Judith blew out the light, all lights save one,
And from its nail the heavy falchion took,
And with both hands tight claspt upon the hilt,
Thrice smote the Prince of Asshur as he lay,
Thrice on his neck she smote him as he lay,
Then from her flung the cruel curvèd blade
That in the air an instant flashed and fell."

—*Thomas Bailey Aldrich.*

Judith—the Deliverer

THE Book of Judith is found in our old family Bibles in what are called the Apochryphal Books. It was originally written in the Hebrew language, by a Palestinian Jew, some two hundred years before the coming of Christ. Like the ancient Hebrew books of the Bible, which have been translated into Greek, this Book of Judith not long after its composition was similarly honored, and after a time found a place in the Greek Bible. It has been a question, at least for some time, whether the book is authentic history or a romance. Its historical statements are utterly irreconcilable, and its geographical difficulties fully as embarrassing. It is now generally agreed that it is a story, simply the work of the imagination, and is entitled to no credence whatever as a historical work any more than is the Arabian Nights. It is one of the few choice specimens of esthetic literature which can be found among the earlier writings of this people. While there are some teachings in the book, which, from the standpoint of our nineteenth century civilization, must be considered as immoral, and therefore dangerous, the character of Judith in the main is one of which any writer might be proud. She has been an interesting character for the artist in all ages. She well represents the patriotic womanhood which was the result of Jewish teachings and training through a long series of ages. The book is to be read, therefore, as a story and not as a history; much less as a canonical book of scripture, but as a high conception of a Jewish woman, as portrayed by a writer living two centuries before the Christian era.

The author commences his story by giving an account of a destructive war which an Assyrian king, named Nebuchadnosar, had waged against the Medes and Persians. After five years of contest, the king of the Medes and Persians had been killed, and the capital destroyed. In this war, the neighboring states had allied themselves with one side or the other. The Jews were among those who did not come to the support of the Assyrian

king, and therefore at the close of the war he determines to chastise them for their failure to support him. There is no place in recorded history where these events will properly find a place, and therefore the conclusion is irresistible, that the whole production is simply the creation of the author's fancy, as much so as the contents of any other work of fiction.

The story goes on to tell how the king called his chief general, the next in command to him, Holofernes by name, and tells him that he has determined to punish those residing in the "west country, because they disobeyed the order of my mouth." This great army, consisting of thousands of infantry and cavalry, and the wonderful things which they proposed to do, are set forth in the most glowing colors. The commander and his forces start forth on their mission of destruction, as an army of locusts, and as "the sand of the earth for multitude." The inhabitants of the seacoast make a voluntary submission, but none the less, their groves are burned and their idols destroyed, so that no one shall be divinely honored except the king. Holofernes finally encamped in the plain of Jezreel, as is supposed, remaining inactive for one, possibly for two months. The children of Israel having returned from captivity, hearing of this man's atrocities, and fearing that the temple might be destroyed, determine to resist him and prepare for war, under the direction of Irachim, the high priest. They took possession of the high mountains and fortified villages, while the inhabitants of Bethulia guarded the passes of the mountains. Having made all the necessary preparations, they held a solemn fast and prayed to God for protection. Enraged, as well as astonished at the audacity of these men in thus preparing to fight him, Holofernes makes inquiry of the chiefs of Ammon who these people are. Achior, the leader of the Ammonites, tells him that no power could vanquish them unless they sin against God. The proud Holofernes becomes angry at this statement, and orders Achior to be thrown into the Jewish camp, in order that he might be destroyed in the general destruction which was impending over the people. The Jews pick him up and lead him to the governor, where he tells his story. The next day Holofernes marches against Bethulia, takes the mountain passes, seizes all the supplies of water, and lays siege to the city, which lasts forty days. The famishing people urge upon Onar, the governor to

surrender the city and save their lives, which he finally decides to do unless relief comes within the five days.

Judith now enters upon the scene. Her ancestry is given, and a further statement is made that "Manasses, her husband, had died in the barley harvest." "Now Judith was a widow in her own house three years and four months, and she made her tent on the top of her house, put on sackcloth and wore her widow's apparel; and she fasted all the days of her widowhood. save the eves of the sabbaths and the new moons and the solemn feast days of Israel. She was also of goodly countenance and beautiful to behold, and her husband, Monasses, had left her gold and silver and man-servants and maid-servants and cattle and lambs and she remained upon them. And there was none gave her an idle word for she feared God greatly."

She heard of the complaints of the people against their rulers because of the lack of water, and that the rulers had promised to deliver the city to the Assyrians after five days if the Lord did not interfere to help them. She sends her maid to invite the rulers and elders of the city, and they came to see her. When they were present, she said, "Hear now, ye governors of the inhabitants of Bethulia, for the words that you have spoken are not right touching this oath, that you have promised to deliver the city to our enemies unless within these days the Lord turn and help you. And now, who are ye that have tempted God this day, to stand in the stead of God the children of men?"

This is a high idea of faith in God and the courage which grows out of it. These men have been placed in charge of a sacred trust, and they had no right to say that unless God would interfere, they would surrender that trust. It is their business to stand by the city over which God has given them control and not make any conditions with God or for him as to when he shall interfere and when he shall not. She further says to them: "And now try the Lord Almighty and ye shall never know anything. For ye cannot find the depths of the heart of the man, neither can ye perceive what he thinketh; how then can ye search out God, that hath made all things, and comprehend his purposes? Nay, my brethren, provoke not the Lord our God to anger; for if he will not help within five days, he hath power to help us when he will, even every day. Do not bind the counsel of the Lord, for God is not a man that he

may be threatened. Therefore, let us wait for salvation from him, and call upon him and he will hear, if it please him." This is faithful and wholesome teaching on the part of this widowed woman; and that these men should receive it so kindly and act upon her suggestions so freely, shows the exalted position which a devoted, religious woman held in the counsels of the Jewish people.

They have had a glorious heritage. It will be dishonorable to betray it. If they do, all Judea shall lie in waste. The slaughter of their brethren and the desolation of their inheritance shall come upon them. She most earnestly appeals to them once more. "Now, therefore, O brethren, let us show an example to our brethren because their hearts depend on us, and the sanctuary and the house and the altar rest on us. Besides all this, let us give thanks to the Lord our God who trieth us, even also as our fathers."

The officers receive this earnest, patriotic, womanly appeal with great respect, and Ozias, the governor, answers, "There is none who will gainsay thy words." They were compelled to yield to the persistent request of the people, and to make to them a promise which they dare not break. They beseech her, however, "therefore, pray thou for us, for thou art a goodly woman, and the Lord will send us rain to fill our cisterns that we thirst no more." Judith, as if inspired with a message from heaven, says to them, "Hear me, and I will do a thing which shall go from generation to generation, to the children of our race." They are to send her and her maid out of the city that night with a bag of provisions, and within the next five days the Lord will visit Israel by her hands. They must not inquire any further into her plans until they are accomplished. They confide in her and without any further knowledge of what she will do they promise to aid her.

The officials went to their accustomed duties, while Judith went to prayer. She had taken a great burden upon her, and only God could show her the way out. The story tells us, "Then Judith fell on her face and put ashes on her head, and uncovered the sackcloth wherewith she was clothed;" and about the time that the incense of that evening was offered in Jerusalem in the house of the Lord, Judith cried with a loud voice to the Lord: "O God, O my God, hear me also the widow. What will be, thou hast thought of, and what thou hast thought of comes to pass. . . .

JUDITH

Behold, the Assyrians are multiplied in their power and are exalted with horse and man; they glory in the strength of their footmen; they trust in shield and spear and bow, and know not that thou art the Lord that breaketh battles. The Lord is thy name. Throw down their strength in thy power, and bring down their force in thy wrath, for they have purpose to defile thy sanctuary and pollute the tabernacle where thy glorious name resteth, and to cast down with sword the horns of thy altar. Behold their pride, send thy wrath upon their heads, and give unto me which am a widow the power that I have conceived. For thy power standeth not in multitude, nor thy might in strong men; for thou art the God of the afflicted, thou art a helper of the oppressed, an upholder of the weak, a protector of the forlorn, a savior of them that are without hope. I pray thee, I pray thee, O God of my father, king of every creature, hear my prayer and make my speech and deceit to be their wound and strife, who have purposed cruel things against thy covenant, and thy hallowed house, and against the house of the possession of thy children." A simple, fervent, eloquent prayer and full of confidence in God as a defender of the weak and a refuge for the helpless.

According to the story, when she had concluded her prayer, she called her maid and, going into their chamber, she removed all the garments which for these years had been an indication of her widowhood. She anointed herself with precious ointment, arrayed herself in her finest apparel, and practiced every art known to her which would in any manner enhance her beauty. When this had all been completed, she took her maid with her and, passing through the gates of her own people, she went toward the Assyrian army expecting to be taken prisoner by them. As she had anticipated, she was met by the sentinels and they inquired whither she was going. She claimed she was fleeing from the Hebrews and desired to be taken into the presence of their general, for she was able to show him how he could win all the hill country without the loss of a single soul. They selected a bodyguard of a hundred picked men, who escorted her and her maid to the tent of the commander-in-chief. She created no little sensation by her presence. "Then there was a concourse through all the camp, for her coming was noised among the tents, and they came about her as she stood waiting without the tent of Holofernes; and they wondered at her

beauty and admired the children of Israel because of her, and every one said to his neighbors, Who would despise this people that have among them such women?"

Having reached his tent, she fell upon her knees and did him reverence. The commander, as well as his servants and soldiers, is surprised at her beauty. He treats her most royally, promises her entire safety that none shall hurt her, and inquires why she fled from the Hebrews and why she came to him. She proceeds to relate to him the story which she had prepared. She compliments him for his wisdom and subtle devices and because he is "mighty in insight and admirable as an army leader." She informs him that her people are under God's protection so long as they conform to his law, but because of the pressure of famine upon them they are about to eat of forbidden articles and to consume the grain and the wine and the oil which are part of the sacred offerings due the temple. It is not lawful for any one to so much as touch them with their hands. When they do this, their God will turn against them, and they shall be delivered into your hands. She had learned this and was sent of God to reveal this to him, "whereat all the earth shall be astonished." She proposes to remain with him, and will go out from time to time; and when her people have committed this sacrilege, it will be announced to her and she will then report to him that the hour has come to go forth and attack them, and not one of them shall escape.

Judith is now in high honor. She hath won the heart of the commander and of his servants. "There is not such a woman from one end of the earth to the other for beauty of face and intelligent speech." The commander promises that if her plans succeed, she shall dwell in the palace of the king and he will adopt her God. For two or three evenings she goes forth for prayer and ablutions at the fountain, earnestly desiring God to raise up the children of her people. On the fourth day, the commander made a feast to his servants, and in company with Bagoas, the chief of the eunuchs, he concluded that this beautiful woman would laugh him to scorn if he did not take occasion to win her for his own use. A banquet is arranged for, and the message is carried to the woman in a very dainty style: "Let not this fair damsel fear to come unto my Lord, and to be honored in his presence, and to drink wine and to be merry, and to be made this day as one of the

Assyrians that serve in the house of Nebuchadnosar." Judith graciously receives this unbecoming proposal by replying, "And who am I that I should gainsay my lord? For everything that pleaseth him I will do speedily, and it shall be my joy until the day of my death." She arrayed herself in the best apparel and decked herself with jewelry. At the appointed time she came to the banquet and ravished the heart of the commander with her winning ways. He urged her to drink and to be merry with him. She ate and drank what her maid had prepared, while he drank more wine than he had drunk at any time before in one day since he was born. The result was, when the feast had ended and Judith was left alone with him, he was dead drunk with wine and had fallen over on his couch.

Judith had left her maid outside with her provision bag in her hand as she had done before when she went to prayer. "Then all went out and there was none left in the bedchamber, neither little nor great. Then Judith, standing by the bed, said in her heart, "O Lord God of all power, look at this present, on the work of my hands for the exaltation of Jerusalem. For now is the time to help thy inheritance and to execute my enterprise to the destruction of the enemies that are risen up against us." Then she came to the pillow of the couch and took down the sword from thence, and approached his bed and took hold of the hair of his head, and said, "Strengthen my arm, O Lord God of Israel, this day, and she smote twice upon his neck with all her might, and she took away his head from him and went forth."

The head was given to the maid, who placed it in her provision sack. They two went out together according to their custom when they went to prayer, and in the dim light of the morning they came to the gates of the city, with the head of the commander and the hangings of the bed upon which he lay. "Then called Judith from afar off to the watchman, Open thou the gates, for God, even our God, is with us to show his power yet in Israel and his strength against the enemy." The men ran down to the gates and hastily called a counsel of the elders. A fire was kindled for light, and as they gathered about her to hear the wonderful story, she broke forth in triumphant joy: "Praise, praise, praise God, I say, for he has not taken away his mercy from the house of Israel, but hath destroyed the enemy by my hand this night." She took

the bloody head out of the bag and, holding it up in their presence, said: "Behold the head of Holofernes, the chief captain of the army of Assur, and behold the canopy where he did lie in his drunkenness, and the Lord has smitten him by the hand of the woman. As the Lord liveth who had kept me in my way that I went, my countenance has deceived him to his destruction, yet had he not committed sin with me to defile and shame me."

Her countrymen were greatly amazed at what she had done, and invoked the blessings of God upon her. Ozias, the ruler, says to her: "O daughter, blessed art thou among all the women of the earth, and blessed be the Lord God which created the heavens and the earth, which hath directed thee to the cutting off of the head of our chief enemy. For this thing confidence shall not depart from the hearts of men which remember the power of God forever. And God turned these things for a perpetual praise, because thou hast not spared thy life for the affliction of our nation, but hast avenged our ruin, walking in a straight way before our God. And all the people said, Amen, so be it."

Exalted by her success, she now assumes the part of an adviser to the ruler. She directs the officials to hang his head on the wall. The people are to rush down as though intending to make an attack. The Assyrians will visit the tent of Holofernes; when they find he is dead, they will be thrown into confusion, and the Hebrew army shall then make its attack. They did as she directed. The Assyrians rushed to the tent to waken their general, and they find him "dead, and his head was from him." A terrible cry and noise arose in the midst of the camp. Great fear and trembling seized upon all, and they rushed forth and fled to the hill country and the plain. The Hebrews routed the whole army, captured their camp, and the spoil that was taken was very great.

When Joachim, the high priest, and the council came to see and hear what had been done, they made an occasion for thanksgiving. All the rich furnishings which belonged to the tent of Holofernes had been taken and given to Judith. The men wreathed garlands about their weapons and sang songs of rejoicing. The women, crowning themselves with olive leaves and led by Judith, went forth to rhythmic dance, as she sang a song of victory. The spirit of the song is exultation in God, who protects the weak and

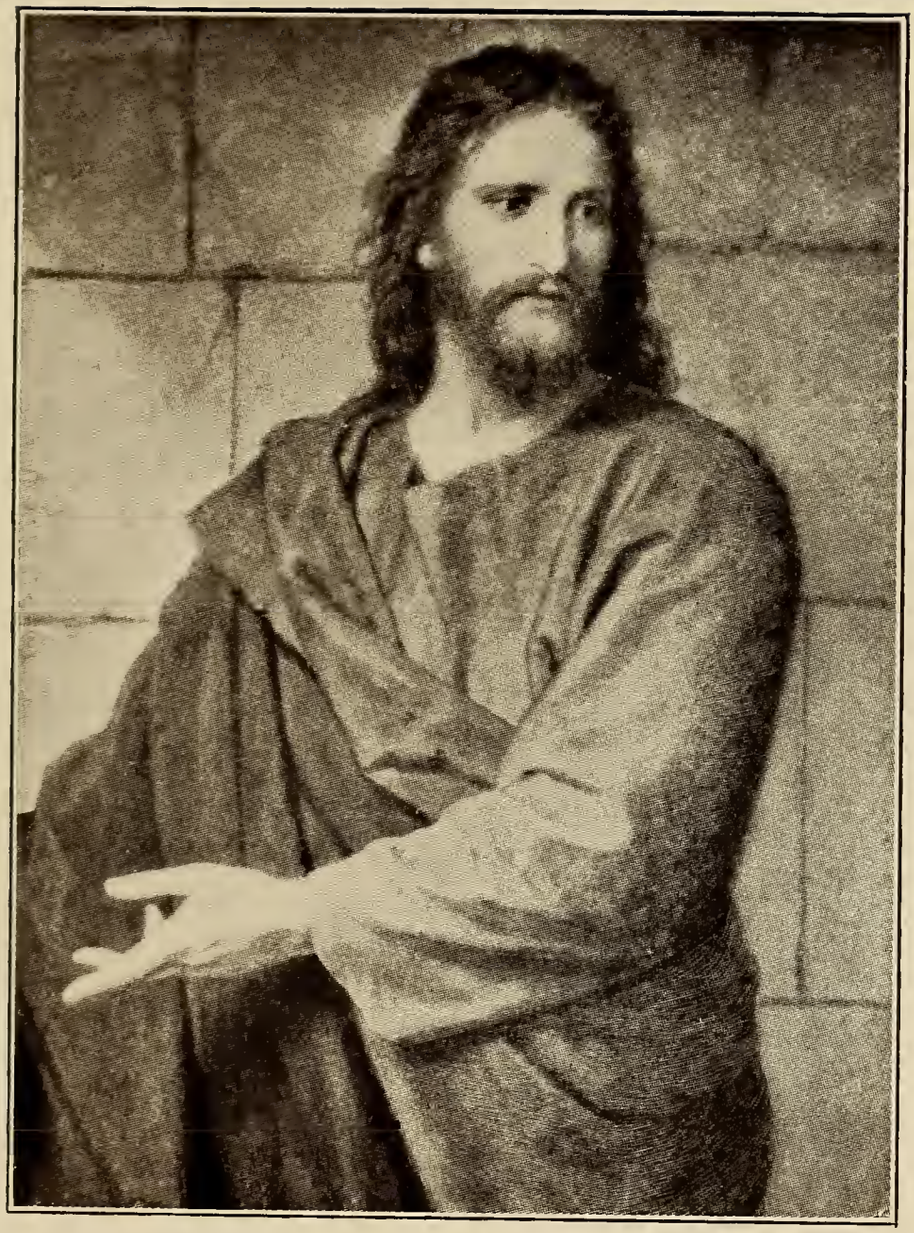
the helpless. He had turned aside from the counsels of the great and had used her, a weak woman, to overcome the power of the enemy. No doubt the writer was familiar with the song of Deborah, and to some extent modeled his own after it. While not so vigorous as the other, it is still a fine specimen of ancient composition. The conception of the woman, which he has given us, bating a few weaknesses, is a magnificent one. A devoted, pious woman, a lonely widow, living in retirement, when under the influence of a strong conviction of duty and with firm faith in God, single-handed and alone, grasps the hand which God offered her and in his strength becomes the deliverer of her people.

"Begin unto my God, with timbrels,
Sing unto my Lord, with cymbals,
Adapt unto him a new psalm;
Exalt him and call upon his name.
For a God who decideth battles, is the Lord;
For into his camps in the midst of the people he hath delivered me out of the hands of my persecutors.
Assur came out of the mountains of the north,
He came with ten thousands of armies;
The multitudes thereof stopped the torrent;
Their horsemen covered the hills.
He threatened that he would burn up my border,
That he would kill my young men with the sword,
That he would dash the suckling children against the ground, and make the children a prey, and the virgins a spoil;
But the almighty Lord hath disappointed them by the hand of a woman;
The mighty one did not fall by young men,
Neither did the sons of Titans sit upon him;
But Judith, the daughter of Marari, weakened him with her beauty.
For the exultation of the oppressed in Israel,
She put off her garments of widowhood,
She anointed herself with ointment,
She bound her hair with a filet,
She took a linen garment to deceive him,
Her sandals ravished his eyes,
Her beauty took his mind prisoner;
So the sword passed through his neck.
Persians quaked at her boldness,
And the Medes were rent asunder at her hardihood.
Then my humbled one shouted for joy,
And my weak ones cried aloud and were astonished;
They lifted up their voice and took to flight;
Sons of damsels pierced them through, and wounded them as fugitive's children.
They perished before the embattled hosts with my Lord.
I will sing unto my God a new song.
Oh, Lord, thou art great and glorious,
Wonderful in strength and invincible.

Let all creatures praise thee
For thou speakest and they were made,
Thou sentest thy spirit and created them,
There is none can resist thy voice;
The mountains shall be moved from their foundations,
The rocks shall melt like wax at thy presence;
Yet thou art merciful to them that fear thee;
For all sacrifice is too little for a sweet savor unto thee,
All the fat is not enough for burnt offerings;
But he that feareth the Lord is great at all times."

The story concludes by telling us that Judith gave all the spoil which she had received, as an offering to the Lord in Jerusalem. She afterwards returned to her own home, remained in her own land, and was honored throughout all the country. She lived to be a hundred and five years of age, and although many sought her she never married again. When she died they mourned for her seven days. "And there was none that made the children of Israel afraid any more in the days of Judith, nor for a long time after her death."

"The object of the writer, no doubt, was to show by this interesting story that as long as God's people walk in his commandments fearlessly, no matter how distressing the circumstances in which they may be temporarily placed, the Lord will not suffer the enemy to triumph over them, but in due time appear for their deliverance and cause even those who are not Jews to acknowledge that the God of Israel is the only true God."



THE MASTER

New Testament Women

Elisabeth---the Mother of the Forerunner

"Oh, say to mothers, what a holy charge
Is theirs! With what a queenly power their love
Can rule the fountain of the new-born mind!
Warn them to wake at early dawn and sow
Good seed before the world hath sown her tares;
Nor in their toil decline, that angel bands
May put their sickles and reap for God,
And gather in his garner."

Elisabeth—the Mother of the Forerunner

THE last of the prophets of the Old Testament canon, Malachi, made the divine announcement, "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord." Some of the Jews really thought the old Elijah who had appeared on Mount Carmel would come again. When the forerunner came, it was in the spirit and power of Elijah. He came four hundred years after the announcement had been made, and at a remarkable period in the world's history. The Jews were badly scattered. The Roman Empire had covered the civilized world, extending from Spain to the borders of Judea. It was a dark day to God's people. The Jewish nation was under the Roman yoke, and the church was in a low state of spirituality. Formalism prevailed in its religious ceremonials. For four hundred years the voice of prophecy had been hushed in silence, while here and there was a loving heart looking and waiting for the "consolation of Israel." During these days, God had been preparing for the advent of his Son, and the "fullness of time" has now arrived.

The priests since the time of David, more than a thousand years before, had been divided into twenty-five courses known as "houses" and "families." Of the original courses, however, only four, each numbering about a thousand members, returned from Babylon after the captivity. Out of these, the old twenty-four courses were reconstituted with the same names as before. The course of Abia was the eighteenth of the twenty-four into which the priesthood was divided. Each course ministered for one week from the Sabbath to the following Sabbath, beginning with the Sabbath morning service. Not only was the original assignment of the time of service of the twenty-four courses determined by lot, but the work of each priest was determined in the same manner, who should kill the sacrifice, who sprinkle the blood, who burn the incense. This lot was cast every week, the members of the course meeting for the purpose in a room in the temple.

There was a time in their history when it was a very great honor to be numbered among the priesthood, but they also had become affected by the general corruption of the times. "As a class, they were blind guides of the blind. The corruption and demoralization of the order, especially in its higher ranks, grew more and more complete. The pride, the violence, the irreligion and luxury of this ecclesiastical aristocracy already, at the beginning of our era, pointed to the excesses ere long reached. . . . The high priests themselves were ashamed of their most sacred functions. The having to preside over sacrifices was thought by some so repulsive and degrading that they wore silken gloves when officiating, to keep their hands from touching the victims. Given to gluttony, the special vice of their Roman masters, they also like them abandoned themselves to luxury, and oppressed the poor to obtain the means for indulgence. Josephus tells us that they even sent their servants to the threshing floors and took away by force the tithes that belonged to the priest, beating those who resisted, and that thus not a few poorer priests died from want."

And yet in spite of the evil influences by which they were surrounded, there were some who were patiently waiting and looking for the "consolation of Israel." Whatever others might do, "they with steadfastness of purpose worshipped God and kept his commandments." As, in the days of Elijah, when the great prophet complained that he was left alone in the land (his countrymen having in a body gone over to idolatry), God was able to inform him that there were seven thousand in Israel who had not bowed the knee to Baal, so in this dark age there were scattered saints in every part of the land—Elisabeths, Josephs, Marys, Simeons, Annas—who were keeping the fire of true religion unextinguished. Even in the temple, the focus of evil, a man was to be found like Zacharias, who, when he had come up to Jerusalem in the order of his course to fulfil the order of his priesthood, and when he was chosen by lot to burn incense—the sign that the prayers of Israel were ascending to heaven at the hour of prayer—did not merely perform the ceremony, but accompanied the mechanical act with such fervent intercessions that an archangel was attracted from heaven to assure him that his prayers were heard."

There came up from Hebron to take his place in the course of Abia and to perform his week of service in the temple, a man

named Zacharias, meaning *whom God remembers.* He had left behind him at home a childless wife, Elisabeth by name (worshiper of God), like himself advanced in years. She was of the family of Aaron as was her husband, hence both of them of noble descent. They had not been led away from the true path by the corrupting influences which they saw all about them, but they kept the faith for "they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless." In spite of the fact that they belonged to a priestly ancestry running back through hundreds of years, and of the consciousness that they were trying to live godly lives, there was still a grief in the hearts of both of them. Elisabeth had no child, and in our day it is hard to realize how much this meant to her. "Give me children or I die," was the burden of every childless Jewish mother's heart. To have no child was considered as a punishment from the hand of God. The birth of a child was a special blessing, for it prevented the name of the father from being cut off from among his brethren. With many, no doubt, there was the hope that the Messiah might come into their family. These two aged people seemed to have made it the burden of their prayers, and yet no child had been granted to them. The hour of Providence had not yet come. The fullness of time when the Messiah should appear had been determined, and Zacharias and his wife had to wait. When the child did come, in a special sense he was the gift of God.

"There were said to have been twenty thousand priests in the days of Christ, and it could therefore very rarely, probably never, fall to the lot of the same priest twice to offer incense. Hence this would have been, quite apart from the vision, *the most memorable day* in the life of Zacharias." The temple building was divided into two portions, the holy, and the most holy place, into which latter the high priest alone could enter, and he only once a year on the great day of atonement. Doors softly shut in this awful chamber of silence and dark emptiness, for it had no windows, and was further secured by a huge curtain of many-colored Babylonian tapestry hanging outside the doors. The golden altar of incense stood between the table of shewbread and the golden candlestick in the holy place before the curtain or veil that separated it from the holy of holies. It was made of fine wood, overlaid with gold. The fire for burning the incense was obtained from the altar of

burnt offering, which stood outside the sanctuary in the court of the priests. The censer, or vessel in which the coals were borne and the incense burned, was probably a shallow pan. Robed in white, and with unsandled feet, Zacharias, the priest, with two attendants solemnly approached the altar of burnt offering, one filling the golden censer with half a pound of sweet smelling incense, the other bearing the golden vessel with burning coals from the altar. Turning from the altar, slowly and reverently they passed within the holy place to the altar of incense. On this the two attendants spread the coals and arranged the incense, then left Zacharias alone and motionless in the dim light of the seven-branched candlestick till the sound of a bell rung by a priest at the altar of burnt offering in the court where he was sacrificing a lamb told him that the moment had come to burn the incense. The people without now offered silent prayer. It was while the fragrant smoke arose with the prayers of the people that the angel presented himself to the eye of Zacharias.

He stands with uplifted hands, joining in the prayers offered by the silent multitude without. He prays no doubt that the sins of the nation, his own sins, and the sins of his household might be forgiven, and that the long looked-for Messiah, the hope of Israel might soon appear. While in this attitude, an angel appears, half-veiled by the fragrant smoke which, curling upwards, filled the place. It is not strange that this lone priest is filled with fear and troubled as if the body shook with the unwonted agitation of the soul. Fear of the supernatural seems to be instinctive with all of us. The stout-hearted Gideon had trembled at the sight of an angel. Manoah had expected to die after a similar vision, and when Daniel saw the very angel now before Zacharias, "there remained no strength in him." "Had Zacharias thought how the skies rejoice at a sinner's repenting, how the angels are always near us when we pray, how they bear our prayers into the presence of God, and how at last they guide the souls of the just to everlasting joy, he would have rejoiced even while he trembled."

The angel does not at first announce his name, but seeks to quiet the heart of the priest by his words, "Fear not." He then makes known his message, speaking words easily understood. His prayer had been answered. The Messiah would now be revealed, and the faithful priest who had been looking for him so long

should be honored by a relationship to him. He had long desired a son; his wish would now be gratified, and the son to be born should go before the Messiah and prepare his way. He should have joy and gladness in the possession of this son. He would be great in the sight of Him who judgeth not by outward appearances but by the heart. His appetites would be brought into subjection and his spiritual nature would be supreme. He would turn away from strong drink, and the power of the Holy Spirit would be upon him from the very day of his birth. He would carry the message of a coming Christ to the people, and many of them would turn to the Lord. He would go before the Messiah with the power of another Elijah; he would turn the hearts of the fathers, the Israelites, to the Gentiles, the children—apostate, prodigal outcast, but still children. He would make ready a people prepared for the Lord. Those who hear him will gladly receive the Messiah; those who reject the forerunner will also reject the King when he comes.

Evidently Zacharias was no visionary enthusiast who imagined simply what he desired. The thing seemed to him impossible, for he and his wife were past the period when they might expect children, and he desired some evidence that this would really happen. The testimony of an angel in such a place should have been proof enough, but we are all slow to believe even the testimony of heavenly messengers. He was a priest and from his youth up had been trained in the knowledge and service of God, and this conduct indicated a lack of faith on his part. As a sign to him that the angel had come from God and that what he had promised would be fulfilled, and as a judgment upon him for not accepting the truth, he should be dumb and not able to speak until the period should arrive when this thing would be performed. In the meantime, the people outside, who were in the attitude of prayer, became alarmed at the priest's delay. He ordinarily remained only long enough to burn the incensé. His appearance at last explained to them the delay. It was customary to lift his hands over the whole congregation to give with his lips the blessing of the Lord and to glorify his name. They bowed themselves down a second time to worship, that they might receive a blessing from the most high. They could receive no blessing that day, for the priest was speechless and he could no longer minister in his

course. From something in his appearance or the expression of his face, they concluded he had seen a vision.

As soon as his work was completed Zacharias returns to his home in Hebron. "His journey, if it was in October as seems most likely, would lead him through the cheerful scenes of the grape harvest, a great event even yet in the Hebron district. Had it been in April at the spring service, the stony hills and deep red or yellow soil of the valleys through which he had to pass would have been ablaze with bright colors. Towns of stone houses, of which the ruins still remain, rise flat-roofed from the hillsides or from their tops, in sight of each other all the way. Fields with stone walls now in the autumn lay idle after the harvest or were being resown; but the vineyards which spread far and wide over valley and sloping height, resounded with voices, for the houses were wellnigh forsaken to gather the grapes." He reaches his home in due time and makes known to his wife the great honor that shall come to their humble home. No doubt the wife rejoiced as did every Jewish woman at the prospect of children; but during these early months she most likely lived in retirement, probably to avoid the curious inquiries of her neighbors in these perilous times, or because a devotional retirement was best suited for the one who was to be the favored mother of a son so sacredly set apart for a holy life and for high and honored duties.

Six months after this time, this same angel, Gabriel, is sent to Nazareth. Here lived a woman named Mary, who was betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the house of David. Possibly while she is praying he enters her chamber, where the presence of a man would have been very startling at any time, and with the usual salutation tells her that she is highly favored and that the Lord is with her. She was perplexed at the statement and wondered what his presence meant. He tells her that she shall lay aside all her fears, for the honor which has been sought by all Jewish women is now hers; namely, that she is chosen as the future mother of the long looked-for Messiah. He says to her, "The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore thy son shall be called the Son of God and the Lord shall give unto him the throne of his father David; and he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever and of his kingdom there shall be no end." To set at rest every doubt which might arise in

her mind, he tells her that a miracle no less wonderful than that which would happen to herself had already been wrought upon her relative Elisabeth. And the angel departed from her.

What to do in such a position no doubt troubled Mary's heart. What so natural under such circumstances for a betrothed maiden to do, as to go and consult her kinswoman who had also been greatly blessed and confer with her, although she was one hundred miles away? This shows that Mary was a woman of no little force of character, to undertake such a journey which would not be unattended with danger. In all human probability she made this journey alone. It could not have been with her betrothed husband, although the painters often so represent it, for this would have been in opposition to the customs of the age. She may possibly have gone at the time of some of the festivals when friends and neighbors were going to Jerusalem. Here she would meet with Zacharias who would be in attendance even if not performing any duty, and when he returned home she would accompany him.

Elisabeth had learned from Zacharias that her son was "to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." No doubt during these six months since the information had come to her, she had often pondered not only over the work of the son to whom she was to give birth, but also who was to be the greater One whose path he was to prepare. When her relative came from the lowly home in Nazareth, by the emotions evinced by the babe in her own womb (which divine light from heaven enabled her to properly interpret) she was convinced that she whose womb contained the coming Messiah stood before her. Impressed with this conviction, she uttered in the moment of joyful salutation, "Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" Following this, Mary breaks out in a strain of exalted feeling, and to this feeling we owe the earliest and grandest of our hymns, the *Magnificat.*

Mary remained three months with these aged friends. These were interesting months to both of them, as they communed together of the visits of the angel and of the great honor which had been put upon them. As the time of Elisabeth's confinement drew nigh, Mary returned to her own home, as it might have been inconvenient for her to have remained. At the appointed time the child

of Elisabeth was born. Her friends and neighbors came in to rejoice with her because the Lord had shown great mercy to her in delivering her from the reproach of childlessness. On the eighth day the child was to be circumcised, and at this time he received his name. It was proposed by their neighbors that he should be called Zacharias, after the name of his father. This was not a customary thing, but there were occasions when it was done, and this seemed an appropriate occasion. These people are old, the father's work will soon be done, and under the circumstances in which the child was born it seemed best to some that he should perpetuate the name of his father. The father could not speak, but no doubt long ere this had communicated to Elisabeth that the child should be called John. She so insisted, but those present, not being aware of this fact, were amazed, and objected that there were none of their family that bore that name. This is an indication that it was customary with the Jews, as with us, to name children after their forefathers or living members of the family. An appeal was finally made to the father, and he by signs intimated that he wished for a "writing table" and he wrote on it, "His name is John." This table was much like one of our slates. Sometimes it was of lead, the writing on which was done with a stylus, and could be beaten out when not needed. Sometimes it was composed of a thin board covered with wax on which also the characters were traced with a stylus.

For nine months this man Zacharias had been dumb, and his neighbors may have supposed that he was suffering from some paralytic attack and would never recover. Imagine their astonishment, when he had written the child's name, to find this mouth which had been closed so long now begin to speak, and his first words were to praise the Lord for the birth of a son and for his restoration to speech. The circumstances surrounding the affair and the words uttered by the father excited no little interest on the part of those present. These matters were talked about, and the story of his birth went out through the hill country of Judea. This was the section most prejudiced by education and by the influence of the hierarchy, and by these special means God was already preparing them for the coming of his Son. Thus the infant son of Zacharias began to prepare the way of the Lord, even before the Lord was born into the world.

Of the after years of this promising child until he reached the years of manhood, nothing is told us save that "the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his shewing unto Israel." As the son of a priest and destined for the priestly office, he would now learn all about the temple service. He would with his parents visit the temple, whose pinnacles he could see from his own Hebron. Living thus almost under the shadow of the temple, he would be in the center of things rigid and intolerant. His parents were religious in the best sense; they did justly, loved mercy, and walked humbly before God. With such influences at home, the son would grow up not only as a priest but as a prophet, anxious to devote his time and his powers to a reformation among his people and to the bringing of them back to the religion of their fathers.

His parents were old when he was born, and they must have been very old when he reached the age when he could take his place among the officiating priesthood. It is more than likely they were both dead at this time, and having no brothers or sisters, the death of his parents would break up the home and supply a reason for his withdrawal into the desert. This was not an unusual thing in that age. Many pious and earnest people at that period became disgusted with the corruption of the times and retired to the deserts, becoming teachers of religion and gathering a body of disciples around them. Josephus says of one of these men, whose disciple he became: "Not satisfied however with the knowledge thus acquired, on hearing of one named Banus, who spent his life in the desert wearing such clothing as might be had from trees, eating the food which the ground spontaneously supplied, and using frequent ablutions of cold water by day and by night for the purpose of purification, I took him as my exemplar; and having continued with him three years and attained my object, I returned to the city."

How long John remained in the quiet of the home in Hebron before he went worth to perform the work which was nearest his heart, we do not know. But while at home we are sure a mother so devoted as this would have much to do in molding the character of her boy, in awakening within him a love for a religion more pure and sincere than he was accustomed to see in much of the ceremonial observances about the temple. She would fill his mind

with her conception of the Messiah, whose way he was to prepare, and would awaken within him an enthusiasm to bring back to his service and worship, the nation which had drifted into cold formalism, if not indeed into idolatry. How well she did her work is shown in the power with which he drew men to him and inspired them to better things and the courage with which he stood up against wrongdoing and faced death rather than to compromise with wickedness.

Some have wondered how this life, if determined beforehand, could be influenced and changed and directed by even a mother's counsels. This question has been answered as follows by one writer: "It is only by means of human coöperation that the divine purpose in any life can be fulfilled. Any one also may frustrate the grace of God. Multitudes do so, and not seldom the most gifted. The light of genius is to them a light that leads astray; their talents are misspent and become a curse instead of a blessing; and they will appear before the judgment seat with the work undone for which they were created. It is just such a great life as John's which brings home to the mind the full extent of the danger. What if he had failed? What if, yielding to the passions of youth or the temptations of the world, he had quenched the Spirit and instead of being a prophet to lead his fellow men up to God, he had been a ringleader in evil, using the force and fascination of his genius to lead men down the broad road. Is it conceivable that he was never tempted, that he never stood trembling at the parting of the ways? Is it credible that the preacher of repentance did not know that fascination of sin? No man attains to a life of honor and usefulness without passing through the crisis of decision and fighting many a battle with the world, the flesh, and the devil. It may not matter so much to the world whether or not our life fails; but it matters much to ourselves, for it is the loss of the one chance of living and it is an eternal loss."

Henceforth we hear nothing of Elisabeth except in and through the work of her son. It is probable she did not live until he was beheaded, but may have been living when he first went into the desert place to prepare himself for his great work. "To rebuke love of riches would have been idle had he lived in comfort; to condemn the hollowness and unreality of life, he must be clear of all suspicion of them himself. Men instinctively do homage to

self-denying sincerity, and there could be no question as to that of John. It was felt that he was real. Religion had become a matter of forms. Men had settled into a round of externals, as if all religion centered in these. Decencies and proprieties formed the substance of human life. But John showed that there was at least one man with whom religion was an *everlasting reality*."

It is no wonder such a man made an amazing success of his mission. He had nothing to lose but his life, and he cared for nothing but the faithful discharge of his duty. Hunger and thirst and nakedness had no doubt been his familiar friends, and he who had faced the terrors of the desert so long would quail before nothing else. "What to him was a scowling Pharisee, or a mocking Sadducee, or a fawning publican, or a rough soldier, or a riotous mob? These were jocund, cheerful sights to one who had roamed among the wild beasts of the desert and in the midst of them lay down his head under no canopy, and with no defense but the canopy and defense of the providence of the Most High. Around a man who can despise accommodations and conveniences and deal with nature in ancient simplicity and independence, and move amongst her social and religious institutions like a traveler from another world, free to judge and censure and approve, as having himself nothing at stake—around such a man there is a moral grandeur and authority to which none but the narrowest and most bigoted minds will refuse a certain awe and reverence. And when such a personage assumes to himself divine commission and publishes new truth with divine authority and rebukes all wickedness and scorns all consequences, he takes by the natural right of the wiser, the older, and the better man, a high place above those who feel themselves enslaved and enshackled by customs which they despised."

Blessed be the woman who gives birth to, teaches, and trains, and rears such a son who never feared the face of man; and blessed be the son of such a sincere, honest, religious, devoted mother. He was no weak and wavering man, bending this way and that like the tall Jordan reeds. He was no man tricked out in splendid dress like the glittering couriers at Tiberias. "Among all that have been born of women, a greater and more honored that John the Baptist has not risen."

Mary---the Mother of Jesus

"What was, in the beginning of these things,
Scantly I know by hearing, and such word
As, sometimes, from the brothers of my Lord
Or from his mother, fell. But those not apt
Greatly to speak; since, well nigh to the end,
Scant honor found he in his father's house;
And she who bore him—blessed beyond all
Of mortal mothers—bore a load besides
Of love and fear, wonder and reverence,
So heavy on her heart that her still lips
Were locked as if an angel held them close.
Only you saw, if heaven should seek on earth
Fit mother for its Messenger of grace,
Fit womb to lock such precious treasure safe,
Those were the eyes—communing with the skies,
That was the face—tender and true and pure,
There was the breast—beautiful, sinless, sweet,
This was the frame—majestic, maidenly,
And those the soft, strong hands, and those the arms,
And those the knees—bent daily in meek prayer;
Whereto the eternal love would needs commit
The flower of human kind to bud and blow.
I, who have been that which He found me, hide
My stained cheeks in my hands, speaking of her
Who showed so noble, humble, heavenly,
So virginal and motherly, so fair,
The rose of women."

—*Edwin Arnold, in "The Light of the World."*

Mary—the Mother of Jesus

NO woman that ever lived on the face of the earth has been an object of such wonder, admiration, and worship as has Mary, the mother of Jesus. Around her, poetry, painting, and music have raised clouds of ever-shifting colors, splendid as those around the setting sun. "Exalted above the earth, she has been shown to us as a goddess, yet a goddess of a type wholly new. She is not Venus, not Minerva, not Ceres, not Vesta. No goddess of classical antiquity, or of any other mythology, at all resembles that ideal being whom Christian art and poetry present to us in Mary. Neither is she like all of them united. She differs from them as Christian art differs from classical, wholly and entirely. Other goddesses have been worshiped for beauty, for grace, for power. Mary has been the goddess of poverty and sorrow, of pity and mercy; and as suffering is about the only certain thing in human destiny, she has numbered her adorers in every land, and climate, and nation. In Mary, womanhood, in its highest and tenderest development of the mother, has been the object of worship; motherhood, with large capacities of sorrow, with the memory of bitter sufferings, with sympathies large enough to embrace every anguish of humanity. Such an object of revelation has inconceivable power."

The apochryphal accounts concerning her begin even before her birth. Her parents, Joachim and Anna, of the royal race of David, are childless and are grieved on this account. When Joachim brings a double offering to the Lord, he is rejected by the priest because "thou hast not begotten issue in Israel." He goes into the wilderness and fasts forty days and nights. His wife, Anna, also bemoans her condition and prays for a child. An angel appears and tells her, "Anna, thy prayer is heard. Thou shalt bring forth, and thy child shall be blessed through the whole world." The child is born with all manner of prosperous signs and omens. When she is three years of age, the daughters of Israel are invited to come to the temple that the child may not

turn back from the house of the Lord. "There are floods of pictures representing the sacred girlhood of Mary. She is vowed to the temple service and spins and weaves and embroiders the purple and fine linen for sacerdotal purposes. She is represented as looked upon with awe and veneration by all the holy women who remain in the courts of the Lord, especially by the prophetess Anna, who declares to her her high destiny. It is recorded that her life was sustained by the ministry of angels, who daily visited and brought to her the bread of paradise and the water of the river of life. It is the tradition of the Greek church that Mary alone, of all her sex, was allowed to enter the holy of holies and pray before the Ark of the Covenant."

In her fourteenth year, the priest announces to her that it was time for her to be given in marriage, but she declined. He reported again that he had a message from the Lord, to this effect, and she submitted. All the widowers among the people are summoned to come, each with a rod in his hand, that the Lord might choose one by a sign. St. Jerome says the rods were placed in the temple over night, and in the morning Joseph's rod had burst forth into leaves and flowers.

From this time, the wonderful stories in connection with her life, continue to grow, and the painter's art is called in to embellish the theme. Angels bend down the branches of trees to give fruit to herself and child. Angels are about her everywhere, attending to the simplest duties of life, pouring water on the hands of the child, holding his napkin, and playing about him. After the resurrection she fades from view, so far as the Bible record is concerned, but her career of wonder, from the mythical standpoint, seems only to have begun. Before departing on their mission, we are told the apostles came to solicit her blessing. The circumstances of her death and burial, and the ascension of her glorified body to heaven, are detailed at length in these apochryphal books. When once started, this "current of enthusiasm for the Madonna passed all bounds, and absorbed into itself all that belonged to the Savior of mankind. All the pity, the mercy, the sympathy of Jesus were forgotten, and overshadowed in the image of this divine mother. Doctor Pusey shows "how to Mary have been ascribed, one after another, all the divine attributes and offices. How she is represented as commanding her Son in

heaven with the authority of a mother, and how he is held to owe to her submission and obedience. How she, being identified with him in all that he is and does, is received with him in the sacrament, and is manifest in the real presence. In short, how, by the enormous growth of an idea, there comes to be at last *no God but Mary*." In the earlier ecclesiastical history, there is no trace of this veneration. The apochryphal gospels, the source of most of these marvelous stories, do not go back beyond the third or fourth century.

This veneration of Mary finally degenerated into the *worship* of Mary, as we find it in the Roman Catholic Church of to-day. There is scarcely a shadow of doubt that the origin of the worship of Mary is to be traced to these apochryphal legends of her birth and death, which, in due time, decorated her life with fables and wonders of every kind, and thus furnished a pseudo-historical foundation for such worship. In opposition thereto we quote the words of Rev. E. Tyler: "We have examined to the utmost of our ability and means, the remains of Christian antiquity. Especially have we searched into the writings of those whose works (A. D. 492) received the approbation of the Pope and his council at Rome. We have also diligently sought for evidence in the records of the early councils; and we find all the genuine and unsuspected works of Christian writers—not for a few years or in a portion of Christendom, but to the end of the first five hundred years and more, and in every country in the eastern and western empire, in Europe, in Africa, in Asia—testifying as with one voice that the writer and their contemporaries knew of no belief in the present power of the virgin, and her influence with God; no practice in public or private, of prayer to God through her mediation, or invoking her for good offices of intercession, and advocacy, and patronage; no offering of thanks and praise made to her; no ascriptions of divine honor and glory to her name. On the contrary, all the writers through those ages testify that to the early Christians, God was the only object of prayer, and Christ the only heavenly mediator and intercessor in whom they put their trust."

Turning away from the nauseous stories of the past, these visions of the over-heated imagination, we come back to the New Testament teaching, where alone we shall find any reliable in-

formation concerning this one who was so highly favored and blessed among women. We are sorry to say, the record touching the mother of the Christ is like that concerning her own personal appearance, a very meager one.

It would be natural to suppose that the woman selected to give birth to this divine child, who should be his example, his teacher, his companion for many years, would be a woman of rare excellence of character, and of no little mental ability. He may have inherited from that mother something of her own moral fiber and force of character, as we inherit from our mothers. By her faithful teaching this child was to grow daily in wisdom and stature, and was to learn all those lessons which inexperienced childhood needs to know. The language he used came from her lips. Under her inspiration, he would drink in those wonderful stories of Jewish history; he would listen to her explanations of the prophets, and by her be taught to chant the sacred songs of Zion. She, more than any other, would make real to him the history of his own people, and how God in the past had wonderfully dealt with them. During the years that preceded his entering upon his life work, he lived in daily communion with her, subject to her authority, learning to obey her, and willing to follow her guidance. A woman who came so near the person of Christ, and who was so identified with him during a large part of his life, must of necessity be a person that would interest every Christian heart.

We may fairly infer something of her nature from her nationality. "A fine human being is never the product of one generation, but rather the outcome of a growth of ages. Mary was the offspring and flower of a race selected, centuries before, from the finest physical stock of the world, watched over, trained, and cultured, by divine oversight, in accordance with every physical and mental law, for the production of sound and vigorous mental and bodily conditions. Her blood came to her in a channel of descent, over which the laws of Moses had established a watchful care; a race wherein marriage had been sacred, family life a vital point, and motherhood invested by a divine command with an especial sanctity. She was of the royal line of David, and poetic visions and capabilities of high enthusiasm were in her very lineage. The traditions of the holy and noble women of our country's

history were all open to her as sources of inspiration. Miriam, leading the song of national rejoicing on the shores of the Red Sea; Deborah, mother, judge, inspirer, leader, and poet of her nation; Hannah, the mother who won so noble a son of heaven by prayer; the daughter of Jephtha, ready to sacrifice herself to her country; Huldah, the prophetess, the interpreter of God's will to kings; Queen Esther, risking her life for her people; and Judith, the beautiful and chaste deliverer of her nation—these were the spiritual forerunners of Mary, the ideals with which her youthful thoughts must have been familiar."

She lived at a time when her nation was in bondage and her people humiliated. They had been trodden under foot of the Gentiles, and were now and had been for a time at the mercy of pagan Rome. Herod, who was the nation's ruler, while ostensibly a Jew, was cruel and brutal, using his power for his own personal gratification and the humiliation of his enemies. Is it not likely that she, like many other Judean women, identified herself with the nation in its struggle for deliverance, and waited, and hoped, and prayed for the Deliverer to come? She was of royal blood, inheriting the traditions of her race, and, like Simeon and Anna, she no doubt studied the prophecies and waited for the salvation of Israel. "We can imagine them as *in* but not *of* the sordid and vulgar world of Nazareth, living their life of faith and prayer, or mournful memories of past national glory and longing hopes for the future."

At this time Galilee was a very fertile region, well cultivated, and covered with populous towns and villages. It was the center of every known industry, and the land over which was carried the world's commerce. One of the roads along which the caravan traveled was through this very town of Nazareth. It was situated partly on the side of a hill not far from Mount Tabor, whose summit was readily seen. To the north was "dewy Hermon," made famous by the sweet singer of Israel, and toward the south was Gilboa, where Saul went down in defeat. The hill in the rear of the present town commands one of the finest prospects in Palestine. Keil supposes that in Christ's time this town must have had a population of at least ten thousand souls, but Josephus places the number near twenty thousand. Men of all nations, busy with other thoughts than those that interested the people, would congregate on its streets, and through them would come to these citizens

thoughts of the outside world. It was one of the centers where congregated a portion of the priests when not on duty. Thus the town of Mary at this time was a place of no little importance.

At the time of which we are speaking, Mary was betrothed to Joseph and according to Jewish law was regarded as his wife, although he had not yet a husband's rights over her. The betrothal was formally made with rejoicings in the home of the bride. To make it legal, the bridegroom gave his betrothed a piece of money, before witnesses, with the words, "Lo, thou art betrothed to me." It was virtually marriage and could only be broken off by a bill of divorcement. Yet the betrothed did not go at once to her husband's house. To give her time for preparation, and to soften the pain of parting from her friends, or perhaps, in part, to let them get a longer benefit of her household services, an interval elapsed before the final ceremony. It might be many weeks, or months, or even a whole year."

A devout Jewess, as she seems to have been, she would be very careful not to neglect the regular periods for worship. The stated times for morning and evening sacrifice would find her in the quiet of her own chamber engaged in private prayer. While thus occupied one day, one in the form of a man, the angel Gabriel, stands before her and courteously greets her with the words: "Hail, highly favored, the Lord be with thee; blessed art thou among women." Such an appearance would seem strange at any time, and Mary was troubled "and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be." There was no special fear nor stupor, no marked disturbance of mind, but she reflected what this could possibly mean. Whatever temporary excitement there may have been is soon allayed however by the quieting words of her visitor. She is to lay aside all alarm, for he is come to tell her that she is blessed above all Jewish women. "And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end."

To get the full force of this message and its influence on the maiden who now heard it, we must remember that among the Jewish nations there was one hope never lost sight of but always

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before the mind, that either one of them might become the mother of the Messiah. Even Eve in the joys of motherhood looked thus upon her son and called him *Cain,* meaning "possession," for, she said, "I have gotten a man from the Lord." Luther, with others, thinks a better expression of her statement would be, "I have gotten a man, even Jehovah." In her mind, no doubt, was the thought of the promise made that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. From that hour, down through the ages until the moment when the angel stood before Mary, that thought had occupied a prominent place in the expectations of the people. It must have been in the thought of this Jewish girl, who was of the royal family through whom it had been foretold the Messiah should come. Especially would it be thought of now, for everywhere the people were on tiptoe with expectations, believing that the long-hoped-for desire of Israel was soon to be realized.

This record is given us by Luke and must have been related by Mary herself, for the facts could be known alone to her. "She was in solitude without a human witness. From her the whole detail must have come. It gives not only the interview, but the passing thoughts and emotions of her mind. She was agitated and cast about, what the visit meant. We see in all this that sensitive, calm, and balanced nature which was characteristic of Mary. Habitually living in contemplation of that spirit world revealed in the Scriptures, it was no very startling thing to her to see an angel standing by; her thoughts had walked among the angels too long for that; but his enthusiastic words of promise and blessing agitated her soul."

A woman of weak character would have been overcome by such a remarkable appeal to her ambition, her national pride, and her religious enthusiasm. She would have been bewildered by the announcement that she, a peasant girl of Nazareth, in humble circumstances of life, is to be the recipient of the special honor for which Jewish maidens of royal blood and high position have longed and prayed through the generations. She does not doubt the angel's statement, but with earnestness of purpose looks for further information. "Then said Mary to the angel, How shall this be, seeing that I am yet a virgin?" The angel replied to her, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: and therefore also that holy progeny which

shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." As she was well read in the Old Testament Scriptures, no doubt she remembered and applied, as she had never applied before, the prophecy which had been made to Israel centuries before, and which again and again she had heard read in the synagogues: "Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel."

A woman who was betrothed, when betrothal was legally equivalent to marriage, must have seen the danger which would come to her reputation, if not indeed her life; for a violation of that would be treated as adultery and would be punished by death. Who would listen to her story, and how should she acquit herself in the eyes of her intended husband? To be the mother of the Messiah would indeed be very high honor, but how it would compromise a virtuous maiden before her countrymen! But the God in whom she trusted could deliver. She places herself in God's hands, as did her Son himself in his last agonies, and modestly says, "Behold, the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to his word."

Various opinions have been held as to the purpose of the divine wisdom in causing the Savior to be born of a betrothed rather than a disengaged virgin. It would seem to be fitting that the mother of the Messiah should have some one to vouch for her purity and to act as her protector and the foster-father of her child; that also that he should be one, who, as heir of the throne of David, would give to her adopted son the legal rights to the royal dignity; while of all persons he was most interested in resisting the claims of a pretender.

It would not have been strange if some misgivings had arisen in her mind when it was announced to her what should happen. The visitor sets this all at rest by telling her that a miracle no less wonderful than the one which should come upon her, had been wrought upon her cousin Elisabeth. What so natural, under all these circumstances, as to find her kinswoman whom the Lord had so greatly blessed six months before. The place where she resided was a hundred miles away, and a portion of the way to it was through a rugged country. She would go, not simply to communicate the joyful news of the blessing about to come upon her to her cousin, not for sympathy and advice as to how she should

satisfy her betrothed husband, but a confirmation of the statement that Elisabeth was about to become a mother would establish the truthfulness of the message made to her.

She concludes to make the journey. She most likely traveled on foot, as was the custom of her people, and especially as she was poor. It would hardly have been safe for her to go alone, so she most likely went with a caravan, attending some one of the national feasts. Leaving the beautiful town of Nazareth, she would journey southward through the plain of Esdraelon, in sight of the place where in former times Barak had pitched his tents, where Deborah had prophesied, and where the stars in their courses had fought against Sisera and had overcome him. She would cross Kishon, made red with the blood of the slain; she would look upon Gilboa, where Saul, in violation of law, went to consult the witch, and where he heard of his coming downfall; in the valley of Jezreel, she would call to mind the dreadful fate of Jezebel, the wicked queen; she would pass near Jacob's well, where she would see the tomb of the steadfast Joseph; would stop at Bethel, where her ancestor Jacob had seen a vision of angels; would enter Jerusalem, crowned with its magnificent temple, the glory of the world. Here most likely she would meet Zacharias, the priest, the husband of Elisabeth, who would conduct her through Bethlehem, where Ruth had gleaned in the fields of Boaz, and soon after she would reach Hebron, where lived her cousin Elisabeth.

Whether she went alone on this journey or in company with others, it was still a solitary trip to her, for how could she tell any of her friends of her purpose in this journey, or of the wonderful revelation which had been made to her? How she would ponder over all the things said to her and inquire as to their significance, as she traveled along. Her son was to sit on the throne of David and found a kingdom that should endure forever. She could understand that, for, like the rest of her nation, she only thought of the Messiah as a Jewish king who should bring back the lost glories of her race and make the Jewish nation triumphant over the heathen world. But her child should also be called the Son of the Highest, the Son of God. She must certainly have been perplexed as to the meaning of these words. Like the rest of us, she must grow into the meaning of many things through a process

of education. Years after this period, when her Son remained behind in the temple to talk with the learned men, she was not sure that she understood his answers to her. At the miracle in Cana of Galilee she seems not to have fully understood her relation to him. She does not seem to have risen to a full realization of his work while he lived, yet the love of a mother for her child brought her now to the foot of the cross. "But in such slowness to believe and such abidingly imperfect conceptions, she was only on a footing with those who enjoyed habitual intercourse with him, hearing his words and seeing his miracles day by day; for even the disciples remained to the end Jewish peasants in their ideas respecting him, thinking that he was only a political deliverer of the nation."

Elisabeth receives her cousin most heartily, and the Holy Spirit coming upon her before she hears a word from Mary as to the wonderful message which had been brought to her, she exclaims, "Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? . . . And blessed is she that hath believed: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord."

"What other mystery in human life is so profound as the beginning of life? From the earliest days women have called themselves blessed of God when life begins to palpitate within their bosom. It is not education but nature that inspires such tender announcement. Doubtless the Indian woman in such periods dwells consciously near to the Great Spirit. Every one of a deep nature seems to herself more sacred and more especially under the divine care while a new life, molded by the divine hand, is springing into being. For of all creative acts, none is so sovereign and divine. Who shall reveal the endless musings, the perpetual prophecies of the mother's soul? Her thoughts dwell upon the unknown child—thoughts more in number than the ripples of the sea upon some undiscovered shore. To others, in such hours, woman should seem more sacred than the most solemn temple; and to herself, she must need seem as if overshadowed by the Holy Ghost."

Mary's last fear now departs, her hopes are confirmed, and her timidity gives place to courage. The prophetic fire falls upon her,

and with quivering lip and flashing eyes she utters in a voice tremulous with emotion that immortal song termed the *Magnificat* which the church still cherishes as the first hymn of the new dispensation. Some of it seems unconsciously borrowed from the Psalms, with which Mary must have been familiar from her childhood. Some of the passages are analagous to the song of Hannah (I. Samuel 21 : 1-10), but there is in this none of the personal exultation over the enemies which characterizes the song of Hannah and most of the triumphant words of David. Whether this was uttered by immediate inspiration in reply to Elisabeth's salutations, or composed during her journey from Nazareth, or was written at a later period of her three months' visit at Hebron, does not appear with certainty.

"My soul doth magnify the Lord,
And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior.
For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden;
For, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.
For he that is mighty hath done to me great things,
And holy is his name;
And his mercy is on them that fear him,
From generation to generation.
He hath shewed strength with his arm;
He hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.
He hath put down the mighty from their seats,
And exalted them of low degree.
He hath filled the hungry with good things;
And the rich he hath sent empty away;
He hath holpen his servant Israel,
In remembrance of his mercy;
As he spake to our fathers,
To Abraham and to his seed for ever."

Three months passed away at the home of Elisabeth before Mary ventured to turn her face homeward again. The time for the confinement of Elisabeth had arrived, and it might not have been convenient for them to entertain her longer. No doubt she was loath to return to Nazareth until it was necessary. Elisabeth knew of her great secret and of her innocence, but at Nazareth there would be neighbors, as there always are, who would be willing to believe evil of her; and then it would be hard to break the news to her betrothed. When she does return, she is suspected of unfaithfulness to him. He cannot, as a just man, condone so great an offense against good morals and the law of God.

He is kind and merciful, and therefore unwilling to make a public example of her. In accordance with the Jewish law of betrothal, he may personally annul their contract by giving her a bill of divorcement. He had about concluded to do this, when the Lord appeared to him in a dream, telling him of the situation and authorizing him to complete the marriage, which he did; and Mary thus became his legal wife.

It would have been supposed that, as these parents lived in Nazareth, their child would be born there; but prophecy asserted years before that he should be born in Bethlehem, and how strangely circumstances conspire to bring it about. An order went out from Augustus, the Roman emperor, that a census of the people should be taken, probably for the purpose of assessing taxes and determining the military levies. In Palestine this was required to be done by tribes and families, to be in harmony with their social organization. As Joseph belonged to the tribe of Judah and was of the family of David, he came from Nazareth to Bethlehem to be enrolled, and his wife came with him. When they reached there, the town was already so crowded "there was no room for them in the inn." Of that journey we know nothing save that they probably traveled over the same road along which Mary journeyed on her way to Hebron. The child is born and laid in a manger for a cradle. It would be a trial to her, that this wonderful event should come upon her in the midst of such humble surroundings, but He who rules over all had so ordered it.

"Cold on his cradle dewdrops are shining,
Low lies his head with the beasts of the stall;
Let angels adore him, in slumber reclining,
Maker and monarch and Savior of all."

Night closes in and sleep falls upon these tired travelers. Suddenly a company of men appear. Strange things had come to the ears of these shepherds of Bethlehem which they communicate to others. That babe whose advent had been hymned by an angelic choir becomes a subject of no little interest. It is early morn now, the place is astir, and men are discussing the incidents of the past night. May we not hope that some of these people, at least in their hearts, joined with the angels in that Bethlehem hymn? The day advances, and soon that holy family are in a

village house over which stood the star of Bethlehem. When the wise men from the East had arrived, and "when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary, his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh." While these remarkable events were occurring, it is said, *"but Mary kept these things, and pondered them in her heart."* May it not be due to the fact that she kept these words in her memory and reflected upon them that we have the account of these angelic appearances? "The oftener we read this verse (Luke 2: 19), the more assured we feel that Mary was the first and real author of the whole narrative. This pure, simple, and private history was composed by her and preserved for a certain time in an oral form, until some one committed it to writing whose work fell into the hands of Luke and was reproduced by him in Greek."

We next find this mother in Jerusalem, going with her husband to present her firstborn son in the temple and to offer the humble sacrifice appointed for the poor. The child had been circumcised when eight days old; thirty-three days have passed since that period, and the mother now complies with the law requiring the firstborn to be dedicated to the Lord. Poor people could substitute two doves or two pigeons for the more costly sacrifice. As the parents came to the temple, they met Anna, an aged saint who had long been waiting for the consolation of Israel, and she took the child in her arms and gave thanks unto the Lord. Simeon, an aged prophet, also took the babe in his arms and said:

"Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace,
For mine eyes have seen thy salvation,
Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people,
A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel."

The parents must have been astonished at the things spoken concerning their son. How their hearts must have rejoiced at the magnificent destiny which was promised, and how it contrasted with his present humble surroundings. The venerable old man continued to speak, under the influence of the Holy Spirit. "Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against;

yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also, that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed." What an announcement that was!

"This prophecy must have been a strange enigma to Mary. According to the predictions of the angel, her son was to be a triumphant king, to reign on the throne of his father David, to restore the old national prestige, and to make his people rulers over the whole earth. The great truth that the kingdom was not of this world, and the dominion was to be a moral victory; that it was to win through rejection, denial, torture, and a shameful death; that the Jewish nation was to be finally uprooted and scattered; all this was as much hidden from the eyes of Mary as from those of the whole nation. The gradual unveiling of this mystery was to test every character connected with it, by the severest wrench of trial. The latent worldliness and pride of Mary, seemingly good, would be disclosed, and even the poor mother would be pierced to the very heart with the anguish of disappointed hopes. Such was the prophecy of which the life of Mary was a long fulfillment. The slow perplexity of finding an entirely different destiny for her son from the brilliant one foretold in prophetic symbols, was to increase from year to year, till it culminated at the foot of the cross."

A new danger arises. The wise men were warned in a dream that they should not return to Herod, for while he had professed to want to come to worship the child, he really intended his destruction. Soon after a revelation of coming evil is made to Joseph. He is commanded to take the child and his mother at once and go into Egypt, for Herod was seeking his life. Egypt was about three hundred miles distant, was a Roman province, was inhabited in part by Jews, and independent of Herod. That same night he started. The Hope of the world was not to perish at the hand of this murderous ruler. Angered at the treatment received from the wise men, Herod sent a band of soldiers to Bethlehem, to kill all the male children near the age of the Infant whom he most of all dreaded.

The evangelist gives us none of the incidents of this journey, which must have been one of intense interest to the mother, whose son, she had been told, was to have a remarkable future, and yet thus early in his history she is fleeing from home and country to

save this child from being brutually murdered. What history fails to give of this journey has been actively supplied by legends and traditions. The painters have made us familiar with the idea that the journey was performed by the aid of an ass, on which the mother and child rode, while Joseph trudged on before, beside, or behind it. This is not an impossible or improbable supposition. The gifts of the Magi would have enabled them to purchase an animal for the journey. They would probably not travel alone, but with others journeying in the same direction, whom they may have joined on the road.

How long they remained, how they spent their time, and where they dwelt, cannot be determined by any facts given us. The gifts they had received would probably be enough to provide for this journey, and to secure Joseph the tools he needed for his trade as a carpenter; and such a man would be sure, if he remained long, to find work to be done. There were so many Jews here, and they were so free that Mary and Joseph would be less among strangers than one would suppose. These Jews would be glad to afford employment and refuge to a brother from Palestine. Even if they knew that he had fled from Herod, it would not have been to his injury, for Herod had no authority here and was hated by the Egyptian Jews as much as by his own native subjects. Some have suggested Memphis as the probable place where he settled and remained for one, two, or three years. It was no place for Mary and Joseph, and above all, for the child, Jesus, to remain longer than was necessary. Egypt was at this time the incarnation of heathenism, and the old hatred between Egypt and the sons of Israel still survives. Joseph, however, would feel that he needed the same authority for quitting the country that he had for entering it. This he soon received, for an angel commanded him to return to the land of Israel, for they were dead who sought the young child's life. He returned with the apparent intention of settling permanently in Bethlehem, but finding that Archelaus had been appointed ruler there, the one who was supposed to be most like his tyrannical father, he turned aside and went back to Nazareth, his former home.

Pious Israelites, from their earliest years, would accustom their children to the requirements of their religion, and hence would bring them with them to Jerusalem to the great feasts. As

Mary's son had now reached the age of twelve years, it was time for him to appear there to take upon himself the obligations of the law. While the passover was eaten only by males, yet the week of the feast was a time of universal rejoicing, so that husbands were accustomed to take their wives as well as their children with them. We can hardly realize the feelings that must have been awakened in the mind of this child by this first visit to the sacred city. The city itself was holy and worthy of all honor, but made still more so by the holiness of the sanctuary within its bounds. The multitudes who came from all sections to these feasts were almost countless. Every house was crowded with pilgrims, and the whole landscape about the city was covered with booths to accommodate those who could not be cared for in the houses. Such a city, and especially at this time, must have made a lasting impression on this boy. Not simply because of outward and earthly grandeur, but from his earliest years, under Mary's faithful teaching, he had been learning of the wonderful blessings conferred on his nation. He may have heard something of his remarkable birth, and this would awaken strange thoughts in his mind. How anxious he will be to drink in the inspiration of the scene, and to gather information from all sources to satisfy his spiritual longings.

The delightful week ends, and Joseph and Mary turn their faces homeward. With the thousands gathered there, the confusion and bustle at starting must have been indescribable. It would likely be made at night time to escape the intense heat, and in the midst of the darkness, relieved only by torches, there would be danger of being lost or trampled under foot. There would be noise and confusion, parents looking and calling for children, friends for friends, drivers beating their beasts, and all more or less excited. As the crowds would get farther from Jerusalem, parties going in different directions would branch off, the danger would grow less, and the scenes become more interesting. Only when the vast mass began thus to break up, would it be possible for any special group to know if their members were all safe. When Mary and Joseph reached the first night's encampment, they found their boy was not in this part of the caravan. They no doubt missed him earlier, but supposed him to be with the other boys, and that he would appear in due time, but he did

not, and they became alarmed. Amid such a crowd he might be lost to them forever. The only thing to do was to return to Jerusalem and look for him, which city they entered again on the evening of the second day, with no little anxiety of mind.

After anxious and diligent search they found him on the following day in one of the schools of the rabbis, which were held in the courts of the temple. These schools were open, and any one entering might ask or propose a question. There seems to have been a number of rabbis present, possibly because this was the Passover season. Here his parents found him, sitting on the ground with others, at the feet of these distinguished men. His whole soul had become so interested in the law and prophets that he had forgotten all his surroundings, his own family, even the flight of time. It would not have been strange to have found him here during Passover week, but it did amaze them to find him still lingering in quest of truth when the feast was over, and when not only his own family, but the great body of the pilgrims had left the city. With the zeal common to a mother's love and because of her greater nearness to him, she says, "Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? Behold thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing." It seems strange to them that one who had been so thoughtful, so obedient, who had never before given them any special anxiety, should at this time cause them pain and alarm. The answer was given with childlike artlessness, and yet it must have seemed like a gentle rebuke to them. "How is it that you sought me? There was no place where I could so surely be as in my Father's house; there were no matters which could so righteously fill my thoughts as his?" It seemed like the breaking forth of a new light. Her son was outgrowing his childhood. We are told, "they understood not these sayings." He returned with them to Nazareth and was subject to his parents. He must have felt a growing distance between himself and his parents, yet he remained under their authority as if like other children.

"The words of Mary's son have a very far reach, indeed. Mothers find it hard to learn as sons grow up that they have a Heavenly Father's work to do in the great world. How soon the cord of separation begins to strain under the pressure of daily needs. There are mothers who must give up sons at a very early age—too early—to the pressing duties of the world's work and

conflict. They see their boys separate from home, and go into the midst of the world without the world's experience, wisdom, endurance, to put their tender years against the world's hardness, cunning, and selfishness; to struggle on and up, or fall out and perish by the way. Is it not hard? Is it a wonder mothers shrink from, and protest against this destiny? Yet, so it must be. The world's work must be done. The soul's destiny must be wrought out. The fledglings must leave the parent nest and spread their own wings upon the air. Blessed be that God who spreads his divine wings beneath them, 'beareth them on wings,' and teaches them the mystery of flight."

In all this record thus far, and indeed in most of the transactions of this period, the reader must have been struck with the ministration of angels. They announced to Zacharias the birth of John the Baptist; to Mary, that she should become the mother of the Messiah; to the Magi, that they should not return to Herod; they greeted the advent of the Babe with heavenly music; they sent Joseph into Egypt, and later back again into Galilee. "Our faith might be put to shame if the scriptural angels bore any analogy to those of the rude and puerile histories contained in apochryphal books. But the long line of heavenly visitants shines in solid brightness, as high above the feeling and prejudices of an early age, as the stars are above the vapors and dust of earth. While patriarchs, prophets, and apostles show all the deficiencies of their own period, and are stained with human passions, the angelic beings, judged by the most fastidious requirements of these later ages, are without spot and blemish. They are not made up of human traits idealized. They are unworldly, of a different type, of nobler presence, and of far grander and sweeter natures than any living on earth. Their very coming and going is not with earthly movement. They suddenly are seen in the air, as one sees white clouds round out from the blue sky on a summer's day, that melt back even as one looks at them. They vibrate between the visible and the invisible. They come without motion, they go without flight. They dawn and disappear. Their words are few as the advent chorus, yet is sounding its music through the world."

Thus far we have said nothing of the brothers and sisters of our Lord. The names of brothers are given, and allusions are

made to them in several instances. The term "brethren" was often used in the general sense of relatives. Even to this day authorities are divided in opinion as to whether these were real brothers or not. There are several suppositions concerning them. One that they were children of Joseph by a former marriage; or that they were adopted from a deceased brother's family; or they were children of the sister of the mother of Jesus, and so cousins-german to him; or they were the children of Joseph and Mary and so the real brothers of Jesus. Without entering into the argument, we are inclined to accept the more natural and obvious interpretation of the language of the evangelists, that the Lord's brothers and sisters were such in the ordinary meaning of the word. In the case of any other, no hesitation would have been felt to so interpret them. There was a desire on the part of some, however, to separate Christ as widely as possible from other men. If it could be shown that his mother had no other child, that he had no brothers or sisters, it would be seen that not only in his own personality but in the outward circumstances of his life a line of distinction should be drawn between him and all beside. But he was not brought up as an only child. He was a member of a family and had the ordinary experiences of childhood.

It is hard to tell when Joseph died. He does not appear again in public after the visit to the temple when Jesus was twelve years of age. It is generally supposed his death occurred before Jesus entered on his public ministry. This has been argued from the fact that the mother only appeared at the marriage in Cana of Galilee. There is an old tradition that he died when Jesus was eighteen years of age. It is also alleged that he must have died before the crucifixion, or he would have appeared with Mary at the cross. The absence of Joseph from the public life of Christ, and the failure to refer to him while "Mary" and "his brethren" not unfrequently appear, afford evidence not only of his death, but of the inferior part which he sustained as a legal father of our Lord. He seems to have been a good, kind-hearted man who, while he supported and protected the family, would leave Mary altogether unrestrained in her actions and allow her to carry out the generous impulses of her nature.

What must have been the ponderings of this mother during these eighteen years, for a portion of which time she was likely

a widow, while her son remained with her, working at the father's trade and helping, with the other children, to support her? Before his birth she had been told that he was "to reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there should be no end." Does it not seem as if God had forgotten his promise? The son of Elisabeth had grown up in the desert, and these two sons of destiny seem to have had no communication with each other. Later, when Jesus did appear for baptism, John did not recognize him. The mother pondered in her heart the wonderful sayings concerning him, but there seemed to be no indications of fulfillment. When Jesus began his public ministry, neither his fellow-townsmen nor his brethren had seen anything in him to excite their expectation.

Years come and go, and finally the preaching of John the Baptist has set the whole land in motion. His voice came like a trumpet tone, calling the people to a new life. Jesus, led by a divine impulse, leaves his home, goes to the Jordan, is baptized of John, and thus initiated into his coming work. He is led into the wilderness, where he encountered temptations which were to help fit him for life. Thus far he had performed no miracles, and assumed no authority as the public teacher. Soon after this event he appears with his mother at the wedding in Cana. The mother has learned possibly of the change which has passed over her son. While he has not yet used his miraculous power, he possesses it. After all these years of waiting, in the midst of hope and fear, would it be strange if she should want in some manner on this remarkable occasion, to see his career of wonderful works begun? Mary, for some reason seems to be invested with some authority in the house. The wedding festivities have come to a stand, because the wine has failed them. This would be a fitting occasion for him to show his power, and so, while she does not ask him, she indirectly suggests to him the thought that is in her mind, when she says, "They have no wine." From one usually so yielding and tender, comes the apparently abrupt answer, "Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour has not yet come." The story is not given in full, and yet evidently there was in the mind of the mother an impression that something would be done, so she says to the servants, "Whatever he saith unto you, do it." Later there may have come to him a divine

impulse, and what he could not do from simple affection to his mother, he could do by divine sanction. This, the first miracle in the Christian dispensation, was wrought in honor of the family.

The next place that Mary comes prominently before us is at Capernaum, probably a year and a half after the wedding at Cana. During this time Jesus had attended two feasts of the Passover and had twice made a circuit through Galilee, teaching the people and performing wonderful works. His fame had grown rapidly among the common people, and the crowds pressed about him so he did not have time "to eat bread." At this time Mary seems to be living with her children, James, Joses, Simon, Jude, and their sisters (Matthew 13:55). They heard of his intense labors, of the toils he was undergoing, and that he was not taking the needed time for relaxation. They felt sure that such continued, and, to them, unreasonable labors, would eventually kill him. Anxious for his welfare, and believing that he was becoming somewhat fanatical, they set off to bring him home, either with his own consent or by force. The mother goes with them, for she is sure that this son, who has always listened to her voice, and who has been so faithful and obedient to her, will come back to her if she calls him. They find him in the midst of a crowd of people, busily engaged in proclaiming to them the word of life. No work so exhilarating as that in which he is now engaged. He is fulfilling the mission for which he came into the world; the blind are learning to see; the deaf are hearing of a better life; the wicked are becoming dissatisfied with their own wickedness, and are seeking a more desirable way. The satisfactions of the work to which he has committed himself are more than meat to him. The crowd is so great they cannot reach him. A message is sent him, and handed from one to another until it finally reaches him, and the one nearest thus addresses him, "Thy mother and thy brethren stand without desiring to speak with thee." This work in which he is now engaged must not be interfered with for the gratification of any personal relationship. He may possibly have divined their purpose, and duty to God may often conflict with and override family relations. With a heart full of love for the people who are listening to the words of life as they fall from his gentle lips, he spreads his

hands out over these souls who have been mislead by erring teachers, and exclaims, "Who is my mother and who are my brethren? My mother and my brethren are *these* that hear the word of the Lord and do it; for whoever shall do the will of my Father in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother." The blessedness of Mary consisted not so much in having given birth to Jesus as in believing in him and accepting the truths which he taught. Jesus had now risen to a position with which his maternal relations had nothing to do. May not this record have been placed here as a warning against that worship of his mother which he no doubt saw was sure to follow?

To what extent she believed in his divine mission before the final end came, we do not positively know. It is more than likely, from her pondering in her heart the wonderful things said to her and from her own desire to understand him and his work, that she accepted him as the Messiah. If she did, then her trials would be still greater because of the unbelief of her children. They have the idea common to the Jewish nation of what the Messiah should be. He was to come with the pomp of arms, as a conquering king who was to drive out the Roman power, rescue their nation from its thralldom, and reign king in Jerusalem. But this visionary brother, who spent thirty years working at the carpenter's trade with no ambition for power or place, who is wandering up and down the country teaching these poor people and praying with them, may be a good home missionary, but evidently is not the Messiah. As a fanatical preacher, a misguided enthusiast, they may endure him, but not as the Jewish Messiah. John tells us (7:2) how at one time they contemptuously said to him, when the fast at the tabernacles was at hand, "Depart hence, and go into Judea, that thy disciples may see the works thou doest. If thou do these things, *show thyself to the world.* For neither did his brethren believe in him." They knew that Jerusalem was the ecclesiastical center, and if he wanted to be received by the nation at large, he must first have the endorsement of those in authority. The disciples he had gathered about him were poor people of no political influence, and hence could not help him to public recognition. He must be recognized by the priests and the rulers if he expected to become the deliverer of a nation. From their standpoint, their advice was good, but he was not the kind of Messiah for which they had

planned. While some suppose that these brethren were converted later to his mission and were among his apostles, others interpret the passage as conclusive evidence that James, Simon, and Judas, the brethren of the Lord, cannot be the apostles who bore the same names.

At one period in his life, we are not certain of the date, Jesus determined to go back to Nazareth to visit his own family and to proclaim the new kingdom to his fellow townsmen. It was attended with danger, no doubt, but the messengers of the Most High must know no fear. The mother was sorely troubled concerning her son. One writer conceives of the visit as described below. His picture is a beautiful one, and yet it is a question whether he does not describe feelings which must have come to her later in life.

"Refreshment over and thanks returned with covered head by Jesus, we may fancy how Mary followed him to his own chamber. When at last she thus had him alone, she fell on his neck, but instead of kissing him as she had done a thousand times, secretly, in spirit, she hid her face on his shoulder and a stream of tears fell from her eyes. She wept without speaking, and would not let him go.

"At last Jesus said, 'Mother, be calm and sit down by me and tell me why you weep?' She did so, and began, her hand in his, and his eyes fixed on hers. 'I rejoice that at last I have you again, and grieve that we shall soon have once more to part.' 'Do you know this,' asked Jesus, 'how soon or how late I shall leave this world?' 'Oh, my child,' said Mary, 'does not the deathly whiteness of your face tell me that you are wearing yourself out? And if you do not wear yourself out, though I am a woman shut in by the four corners of my house, how can I help seeing that the hatred of your enemies increases daily, and that they have long sworn your death?' 'Granted,' broke in Jesus, 'but have not a great part of the people banded around me, and does not this stand the way of the plots against me?' 'Indeed,' replied Mary, 'the might of your preaching, your independence toward those in power at Jerusalem, the novelty of your whole appearance, and above all your miracles, have won many to your side; but the favor of the people is like a rain torrent, which swells quickly, only to pass away as soon.' 'You are right, oh, blessed among women,' an-

swered Jesus. 'Most of this people seek not salvation from sin, but from quite other burdens, and when the decisive moment comes they will forsake me faint-heartedly and ungratefully. Your look into the future does not deceive me. But even the enmity and evil of men serve the councils of God which I came to fulfill. My way goes downward to deep darkness from which my soul shrinks, but I follow the will of my Father whether the road be up or down.' As he spoke, his countenance, which had been clouded for a moment, was, as it were, transfigured as the divine in his nature shone through the human; and Mary, drinking in all these lessons, thrilled with a more than mortal joy. There was a long pause. Mary was silent, but she was, as always, rapt in prayer. 'Fair,' said she, in the thoughts of her soul, 'is the rising sun, fair the green river, fair the blue sea, but fairer than all else is He. What an hour is this! Mine eyes have beheld the King in his beauty."

We do not meet Mary again until we see her at the cross. The sword which was to pierce through her own heart has done its dreadful work. The record tells us, "she stood by the cross." She meets the anguish of this hour with the same silent, yet dignified, bearing with which she met the first announcement of the angel. She was standing there with her sister Mary, and Mary Magdalene and Salome. She was not one of the group of Galilean women who habitually followed him, although she is with them at this time. She had most likely come to Jerusalem to be near him, but at what time we do not know. John had probably followed Jesus to Pilate's palace, and saw him given over to the cross. As soon as the result was known, he most likely hastened to tell the sad news to those anxious to hear, and to tell her who above all was to bear the deepest sorrow. She probably heard of her Son's fate from John's lips. When she reached the appointed place, the first sight of that Son that comes to her is as he hangs on the cross, mocked by passersby, hated by high priests and dignitaries, who now are rejoicing that he will soon be where he can no longer annoy them. A veil is drawn over her sorrow, but we are sure no other heart so entered into his sufferings as did this heart. After years of patient waiting, of disappointed hopes, of wonderful deeds performed for the good of man, she sees her son apparently forsaken of God and man. But she nobly resolves to stand

ST. JOHN AND MARY

by him to the end, though all others forsake him. So far as is known none of his brothers or sisters were present to witness his death. He knew how faithful John, the beloved had been. While his divine mission was in progress, his family relations must sustain a subordinate place; but now the hour has come when such relationship may be recognized. He looked upon his mother in tears, yet faithful to him in death. He remembered the sorrows through which she had passed on his account and was still enduring. Turning to the faithful mother, with a look of tender interest, he says in substance, "Woman, behold in him at thy side, thou hast thy son given back to thee." Then looking at the faithful John he added, "To thee I trust my mother; let her be thy mother for my sake." When John comes to write the record of this wonderful life and death, this scene comes up before him in all its pathos, and he tells us, "from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home." He took her into his own family circle and treated her as his own mother. Her home was likely in Jerusalem after that, as it was in that city that we have our last view of her. Eusebius, the historian, says she lived fifteen years after the crucifixion and then died in the triumphs of faith.

This agony of Mary has been commemorated for over seven hundred years in the *Stabat-Mater,* a hymn which has been chanted by the Roman Catholic Church, and whose popularity increases with the years. Its author was himself a man of many sorrows. It has not been introduced into our Protestant hymnals because it encourages, in some places, prayers to Mary, but in spite of this, it is a touching outburst of sorrow. We quote a few stanzas:

"Stood the afflicted mother weeping,
Near the cross her station keeping,
Whereon hung her Son and Lord;
Through whose spirit sympathizing,
Sorrowing and agonizing,
Also passed the cruel sword.

"Oh, how mournful and distress'd
Was that favored and most blessed
Mother of the only Son;
Trembling, grieving, bosom heaving,
While perceiving, scarce believing,
Pains of that illustrious One.

"Who the man who, called a brother,
Would not weep saw he Christ's mother
In such deep distress and wild?
Who could not sad tribute render
Witnessing that mother tender
Agonizing with her Child?

"For his people's sins atoning
Him she saw in torments groaning,
Given to the scourger's rod;
Saw her darling offspring dying,
Desolate, forsaken, crying,
Yield his spirit up to God."

The Scriptures do not state that Christ appeared to Mary after the resurrection, but no doubt there were appearances which are not recorded. If she at once made her home with John, she would, of course, soon learn of these wonderful events. Tradition however, has supplied what the sacred writings have not recorded. There is a tradition spoken of by St. Ambrose in the fourth century, and then generally believed, that Christ after his resurrection, appeared first to his mother. "The story as given by Mrs. Jameson in her 'Legends of the Madonna,' is that Mary, when all was finished, returned to her solitude to pray, and to wait for the promised resurrection; and while she prayed, with the open volume of the prophecies before her, a company of angels entered, waving their palms and singing, and then came Jesus in white, having in his left hand the standard of the cross, as one just returned from Hades, victorious over sin and death, and with him came patriarchs and prophets and holy saints of old. But the mother was not comforted till she heard the voice of her Son. Then he raised his hand and blessed her, and said, 'I salute thee, O my mother,' and she fell upon his neck, weeping tears of joy. Then he bade her be comforted and weep no more, for the pain of death had passed away, and the gates of hell had not prevailed against him; and she thanked him humbly on her knees that he had been pleased to bring redemption to man, and make her the humble instrument of his mercy. This legend has something in it so grateful to human sympathies, that the heart involuntarily believes it. Though the sacred record is silent, we may believe that he who loved his own unto the end, did not forget his mother in her hours of deepest anguish."

We hear nothing of Mary in connection with the ascension. We are told in the Acts that "these all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and *Mary, the mother of Jesus,* and with his brethren." If these "brethren" are her own children, as we think, they were evidently not of the twelve who had already been mentioned. They were not believers during his early ministry, but the crucifixion and subsequent resurrection may have been the means of their conversion. This is the last view we have of her, and here the Scriptures leave her, engaged in prayer. From this time forward we really know nothing about her. It is more than likely the rest of her life was spent in Jerusalem with John. One tradition says the beloved disciple would not leave Palestine until she had expired in his arms. Another makes her journey with John to Ephesus, and there die in extreme old age. As soon as we leave the guidance of Scripture, we have no very sure knowledge of her. The very darkness in which we are left is instructive.

"The entire absence of self-seeking and self-assertion is the crowning perfection of Mary's character. The steadiness, the silent reticence with which she held herself to God's will, waiting calmly on his Providence, never by a hasty word or an imprudent action, marring the divine order or seeking to place herself in the foreground, is an example which we may all take reverently to our own bosoms. We long to know more of this hidden life of Mary on earth, but it is a comfort to remember that these splendid souls with whom the Bible makes us acquainted, are neither dead nor lost. If we 'hear the word of God and do it,' we may hope some day to rise to the world where we shall find them and ask of them all those untold things which our own hearts yearn to know."

Since the author began the preparation of this chapter, the woman who penned the above paragraph concerning our Lord's mother (Mrs. H. B. Stowe), has departed this life, and gone to the land of the blessed, where in due time she will be permitted to ask "those untold things which our hearts yearn to know," and will learn from her own lips the story of that sainted mother and of that divine Son. And so shall we all, who are finally faithful enter into the companionship of those who have come

from all sections, and learn more and more of the transcendent beauty of Him who was born in poverty, lived a brief and troubled life, and was cruelly put to death by his own countrymen, that he might save many. Not in the mother, but in her *Son*, is our hope of everlasting life.

CHRIST'S FAREWELL TO HIS MOTHER

Anna---the Last Prophetess

"What qualifications are necessary? Evidently one must be able to see and hear, morally and spiritually, and able to report after God, his spoken thoughts to his children. Are women endowed with these qualifications? Are they the natural teachers? Ask history; ask even the dark ages; ask also the poets and the prophets; then let each questioner look into his own home, and into his own heart, and make reply. To ask the question is to answer it.

"If woman is qualified, is she called? How can one know? Again, let us take the divine judgment. How can we know God's call, his purpose, his requirement of any creature? The songbird sings. She cannot help it. And the great creatures of the sea must take their place therein. They die if out of their own domain, as any soul does if out of God's plan. And all God's ministers must chant his love, for they see his presence and feel his touch, in places, in persons, and in principles, and they must repeat his thoughts after him. Are women thus moved? Let even pre-Christian history answer. Have women thus moved, thus inspired men and cities and nations? Let dying martyrs and transfigured saints give reply. In the latest floodtide of the world's philanthropy and Christian work are women seen and felt? Let the overwhelming statistics of the last thirty years give the answer."

—*Mrs. Amelia S. Quinton.*

Anna—the Last Prophetess

TO dedicate their children to God, and thus give them "a portion in Israel," was a duty which no Jewish parent, much less the parents of Christ, would for a moment dare to neglect. This great event, the circumcision of the child, occurred on the eighth day after his birth. This could have been done in the house where they lodged in Bethlehem, or in the local synagogue, but it is more than likely they would consider the act doubly sacred, if performed within the hallowed courts of Mount Zion. His name had been fixed at the time of the annunciation, but in accordance with Jewish customs, it was formally given at the circumcision. This was the formal admission into the congregation of Israel. The child Jesus was now an acknowledged Israelite. In accordance with Jewish customs, thirty-three days more must pass by before the mother could visit the temple, go outside of her own dwelling, or touch any sacred thing. After this period of time had elapsed, she could appear in the temple, to thank God for her preservation, and to receive from the priest "the legal right of purification."

At the appointed time, Mary, with her child, would be expected to present themselves in the court of the women, as soon as incense had been offered, and the nine blasts of the temple trumpet had given the signal for morning prayer. "She would doubtless be early enough on her way to hear the three trumpet blasts which announced the opening of the outer gate, long before the call to prayer. The earlier she came, the less chance there would be of her meeting anything on the way that might defile her, and prevent her entering in the temple. Women on her errand commonly rode to the temple on oxen, that the body of so huge a beast between them and the ground might prevent any chance of defilement from passing over a sepulcher on the road, and doubtless she rode either an ass or an ox, as was the custom."

While the mothers who were coming that morning gradually gathered, Mary would wait outside the lofty gate of the court of

the Israelites, known as Nicanor, because on it had been hung the head of the Syrian general of that name, whom Judas Maccabeus had slain in battle. When the gate was opened, their offerings were taken to the Levites into the court of the priests, to be burned on the altar. Mary might have had a lamb or a pair of young pigeons for her offering, but as Joseph was poor, she may have contented herself with the cheaper offering of doves. These could have been secured from the temple officers, or may have been purchased in the outer court, which was occupied by sellers of doves and dealers in oxen, in violation of its intended use. While waiting, they would spend the time in giving thanks to God for their recovery. Soon a priest came and sprinkled them with some of the blood, pronouncing them clean, and the ceremony was over.

Mary may have had another object in view, namely, the "redemption of her firstborn." In patriarchal times, the firstborn assisted in the priestly services of the household. When Moses came, the whole tribe of Levi was set apart for this work, and the services of the firstborn were no longer required. The firstborn son was however to be presented in the temple and consecrated to God's service, a month after birth, and be redeemed by the payment of five shekels. What the details of the ceremony were at that time, has not been mentioned. If Mary were living to-day, the ceremony of "redemption" would be something like the following: On the thirty-first day after the child's birth, the father would invite in ten friends and a rabbi who belongs to the house of Aaron. He presents the rabbi with the child and a sum of money, and says, "This is my firstborn here; take unto thee the five shekels due for his redemption." At the same time the father says, "Blessed art thou, Lord, our God, King of the universe, who has sanctified us with thy commandments, and commanded us to perform the redemption of a son. Blessed art thou, O Lord, our God, King of the universe, who hast maintained us and preserved us to enjoy this season." The rabbi takes the money and after passing the coin around the child's head, as a symbol of redemption, lays his other hand on its brow with these words, "This child is instead of this money, and this money instead of this child; may this child be brought to life, to the law, to the fear of heaven; and as he has been brought to be ransomed,

MATER PURISSIMA

so may he enter into the law and good deeds." He then places both hands on the child's head and prays: "God make thee as Ephraim and Manassah. The Lord bless and preserve thee. The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee and give thee peace. Length of days, years and peace, be gathered to thee, and God keep thee from all evil and save thy soul." And the ceremony is then ended.

The mother of this remarkable child was to be still more surprised. It was yet morning and crowds of people are entering in or passing out by this gate. The mothers and fathers who had firstborn sons to redeem, were still standing there awaiting their turn. As they patiently waited, an aged man approaches, who, probably on account of old age, could not come earlier. His name was Simeon, and by some he is supposed to have been the father of Gamaliel, but of this there is no certainty, as this name was a very common one among the Jews. His nation was downtrodden by the Romans. The bloody Herod, a usurper of an alien race, the destroyer of the Asmonean house and kingdom, now ruled, and he was a fitting type of the men who, unable to properly interpret their own scriptures, were looking for a Messiah who should establish an earthly kingdom, as their highest hope. In spite of the perverted hopes of the nation, in spite of the hierarchy which by the very rigidity of its forms and ceremonies was crushing the very heart out of the Jewish faith, there were here and there in quiet places, unknown to the vast mass, sincere, honest hearts who had a glimpse of the truth of a coming Messiah, who should be the spiritual redeemer of the people, and in that faith they were spending their lives. Simeon was one of these men, and while no doubt faithful with others in the observance of the ceremonial law, he, at the same time, lived a devoted life, in touch with the divine spirit. He looked, as did others, for the coming of the Messiah, but to him that coming meant the salvation of his people, not from Roman authority, but from their own sins. Life meant nothing for him so far as his own personal advancement was concerned, so his heart went out for his own people, who had been wrecked by their national wickedness. This devoted man had, at some time, had a premonition through the Spirit, that old as he was, he should not die until with his own eyes he had seen the Messiah. Led by the Spirit, no doubt, he

had come to the temple that morning, as he had come at other times, to pay his morning devotions. As he passed by where Mary stood with her child, he was attracted toward it, and by some impression made upon his almost sightless vision, or upon his devoted heart, he recognized this child as the Messiah. How his heart must have leaped for joy. Bending with old age, he totters toward the fond mother, takes her babe in his own arms, and gives thanks to God in these most touching words. "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all peoples; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and glory of thy people Israel." He thinks of the good of his own nation, but from them must go forth this light which is to lighten all who come into the world.

This old man turns to the mother, and with a prophetic insight says to her, "Your child is destined for the fall of many in Israel, for many will reject him; but also for the rising again of many who will believe on him and live. He is sent for a sign which shall be spoken against and will meet with reproach and contradiction, which will reveal the thoughts of many hearts respecting him." Even Mary herself as well as the nation, shall know the agony of withered hopes and of bitter disappointment for her own soul "would be pierced with a great sorrow."

The old man had hardly completed his prophetic utterance when an aged woman came up, of the tribe of Asher and therefore of Galilee. She is eighty-four years old and bending under the infirmities of age, but still able to attend and take part in the worship of the sanctuary. The years must have been full of strange and sad memories, for she had lived during the period of conquest and oppression when men were made to long more and more for the coming deliverer. No doubt she had witnessed the legions of Pompey when they had encamped around Jerusalem, and had seen the city of David go into the hands of its enemies. The dreadful story of Herod, with its wars and murders and crimes, must have saddened her heart as it had the hearts of her people.

There is little that is known of the tribe of Asher to which she belonged. They occupied the plain east of the Mediterranean from Carmel northward. Some suppose that the whole of the

Phœnician territories, including Sidon, were assigned to this tribe. During the whole course of the sacred history no prominent actions are recorded of them. Asher was one of the sons of Jacob by Zilpah, the handmaid of Leah. He had four sons and one daughter, but on quitting Egypt the family or tribe had so increased that it numbered 41,500 adult males, which made it the ninth of the tribes, Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh only being below it. Before entering Canaan the tribe had increased to 53,400, making it the fifth in number. The Canaanites who held possession of the territory assigned to Asher were too strong for them, and hence they "dwelt among the Canaanites," being inferior to them in numbers. It may be they preferred the ease and comfort of their rich plains rather than the labors and toils of war. Of this tribe was Phanuel, meaning the same as *Penuel, the face of God,* who was the father of Anna.

She had been married seven years when her husband died, leaving her a widow, and as Hebrew girls married at fourteen years of age and under, she was probably at the time of her bereavement not over twenty-one years of age. It is a little singular that, while the father's name is mentioned, there is no mention made of the name of her husband. She never married again, a fact which Luke seems to mention to her honor, but had been "a widow indeed." After the death of her husband, she may have concluded to give herself more completely to the services of the sanctuary, and so came to Jerusalem in order to be near the sacred place. Indeed it is not quite sure that she did not dwell in the temple. In Exodus 38:8, and in I. Samuel 2:22, we find indications that women were employed in some cases about the temple; but whether this was of a strictly religious character, or consisted in certain subordinate services, such as washing, repairing of the temple fabrics, and such like, is not known. There were chambers connected with the temple for the use of the priests. One of these may have been assigned by them to Anna as a special mark of honor to a recognized prophetess. If not always in the temple she was at least constant in every act of worship, making her extreme age no excuse for neglect, but esteeming it a privilege that she was able to be present. "It is well known that the temple services were not much frequented even by men, and by women

still less or not at all except on the Sabbath days and at great solemnities; and it is this fact which imparts a special emphasis to this declaration respecting Anna, the prophetess."

Anna was recognized by the people as one who spoke with the spirit of God. Religious teaching was not confined to the male sex in the Old Testament, nor under the New Testament dispensation. Indeed, we are not sure but that under the new dispensation female prophets were to abound. From the general nature of woman's occupation and duties, the cases in which she became recognized as public teachers of religious truth were rare. The term "prophet" does not necessarily mean the foretelling of future events, as we too often are apt to think. With some of the prophets in the earlier times this was the prominent thing. Prophets, however, were historians, they were poets, they were expounders of the law, they were teachers of patriotism, of morals, and of religion. As we come to New Testament times we find the New Testament prophets had to do with the present and not with the future. "In the scriptural sense of the term, a prophet is not a foreteller of future events, but a revealer of God's will to man, though the latter sense may (and sometimes does) include the former. So the gift of prophecy was that charism which enabled its possessor to utter with the authority of inspiration divine strains of warning, encouragement, and rebuke, and to teach with a supernatural energy and effect." Or as another says, "Prophecy was a spiritual gift which enabled men to understand and to teach the truths of Christianity with authority and effect greater than human. The prophets of the New Testament were supernaturally illuminated expounders and preachers." The nearest of kin to the New Testament prophet to be found in modern times is the lay preacher; men upon whose heads no prelatical hands had rested, but were unquestionably moved by the Holy Ghost to warn sinners to flee from the wrath to come. Joel tells us that in the Christian dispensation this gift shall be more widely diffused among women. We may safely conclude that Anna was a devoted woman of high religious experience, on whom God had bestowed gifts that enabled her to speak to any and all, to "edification, to exhortation, and comfort." The faithful followers of Christ in this place and in this time of spiritual death must have been few,

but whether few or many, such a woman would be well known to them. A woman of such power and so great devotion must let her light shine.

She first of all gave thanks, as did Simeon, for this gift of the Messiah. During all these years she has been waiting for this glad hour. She may have learned from Simeon himself that the Lord was to come to his temple before he went hence. She may have witnessed at this very time his exclamations of praise, and it may have been revealed to her own waiting heart that this was the one who was to redeem Israel. Nor was this simply an impulsive outburst of praise, good for the time but short-lived; but "she spake of him," kept on speaking of him, wherever she could find a listener. When she found one of that little band, who were patiently waiting and looking for the fulfillment of divine prophecy concerning the redemption of Israel, she announced to him the glorious news of the Christ who had come. She would meet them with happy face as they came in through the temple gates, or if for any reason they could not come, she would pass down the narrow streets with faltering step but with bounding heart to repeat the glad news. Nor is it certain she confined her statements to these chosen ones, but as all were looking for a Messiah, her proclamations of the presence of the Christ in their very midst may have been publicly made, and other ears beside the devoted ones may have heard the long-looked-for news. Lange tells us: "There were there a certain number of pious persons dwelling in the capital, who lived in and upon the hope of salvation through the Messiah and among whom the report of his birth was soon spread. Who knows how soon this report might not have spread also throughout the whole country through these means, had not the secret departure of the holy family to Egypt and Nazareth caused every trace of them to disappear from the eyes of this little band at Jerusalem. Perhaps too it was chiefly composed of the aged, the poor, and the lowly, whose influence would certainly not be very extensive. The newborn Savior, now recognized, through the testimony of Simeon and Anna, by the nobles in Israel, was soon to receive the homage of the Gentile world also through the arrival of the wise men from the East."

And so this home missionary has set an example to her sex they have not been slow to follow. Anna was among the first to

recognize the presence of Christ in his own temple, and carried the news to waiting hearts throughout the city. When he was cruelly put to death, women stood about the cross with crushed hearts, but powerless to save. When taken from the cross, they were ready with their tokens of affection to pay to his cherished body the last tribute of respect. They were present to go forth at his command, to announce that he had broken the bounds of death and was again alive. So from that day to this they have been foremost in carrying the glad news of this living Christ to a world lying in darkness. They have organized and managed missionary societies; they have given and collected funds with which to send missionaries. They have been quick to offer themselves for this good work, and in all lands where the standard of the cross has been planted, there are they found, teaching, preaching, exhorting, toiling, suffering, doing all they can do to show their affection for the risen King. The inspiration of Anna's example has stirred thousands of others, some young, some old, who, like her, have gone out into the highways and the alleys, and told a lost world of Him who was not only to redeem Israel, but was to bring salvation to all men. And the great Head of the church has most gloriously blessed them in their labors.

Herodias---the Wicked Mother

"As they turned around from the grave the heavens looked very blank and the earth very vacant; but a true instinct told them where to go—'they went and told Jesus.' Ah, blessed road, whereon thousands upon thousands have followed them since! It is the right road, whatever be the trouble; but most of all, when the waves and billows of doubt are breaking over the mind, when it looks as if Providence had let go of the rudder, and as if there were no love at the heart of the universe, when the Son of God appears to have abandoned his own cause and even to have given occasion to doubt his very existence, then carry the trouble to no one else but go and tell Jesus.

"Long since has he made plain the martyrdom of the Baptist, for John has accomplished far more by dying than he could ever have done by living. He lives on in the world with an influence ever extending; it is even he who keeps alive the memory of Herod, Herodias, and Salome, who murdered him. Whenever truth has to be defended or difficult testimony has to be born, there his image sheds a welcome inspiration; and because he gave up his life rather than compromise with sin, therefore his voice, crying Repent! still echoes in the hearts of men, and his finger is visible across the centuries, outstretched towards 'the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.'"

—*Dr. James Stalker.*

Herodias—the Wicked Mother

THE family of the Herods comes into view very frequently in the early part of the New Testament, because at this period the members of it were the civil rulers in Palestine. Their record is one of "the bloodiest pictures in the book of time," and when one has read of their treachery, their indecency, and their murders of the foulest kind, he is almost tempted to become ashamed of his race. Some of them were men of keen intellectual ability and of great force of will, but utterly unprincipled and willing to sacrifice everything ordinarily held dear by men, for the gratification of their wicked desires.

Herod the Great, the founder of the famliy, was by birth an Idumean, and though an alien by race, was by faith a Jew. His all-absorbing aim was to found an independent kingdom, in which Judaism should subserve the consolidation of a state. He was first appointed governor of Galilee; afterwards made king of Judea, and with the help of the Roman power, captured Jerusalem. He was compelled, by public pressure, to remove the obscure high priest whom he had appointed, and put in his place Aristobulus, the brother of his wife, and a young man of Asmonean blood. Soon after, the young man was drowned while bathing in a tank, as if accidentally by the rough play of his comrades, who were instigated to it by Herod. Later, by his shrewdness and treachery, he became master of a kingdom, which included all the land originally divided among the twelve tribes, together with Idumea. Hyrcanus, the grandfather of his wife, was put to death before his visit to Octavius, and Mariamne fell a victim to his jealousy after his return. His remorse for the deed is well described by Josephus, who says that Herod commanded his attendants always to speak of her as alive. Byron thus writes of Herod's "Lament for Mariamne":

"She's gone, who shared my diadem;
She's sunk, with her my joys entombing;
I swept that flower from Juda's stem,
Whose leaves for me alone were blooming.
And mine's the guilt and mine the hell,
This bosom's desolation dooming;
And I have earned these tortures well,
Which, unconsumed, are still consuming."

Not long after, Alexandria, the mother-in-law, was led to the same fate which her daughter had lately suffered. His sons, Aristobulus and Alexandria, were sent to Rome to be educated, and when after three years they were brought back, the people hailed them with enthusiasm as the true descendants of the Asmonean house. That moment, in Herod's mind, their fate was sealed. Convicted under a false charge, they were strangled to death. Such a record had this man established for cruelty and wickedness, that when the emperor Augustus was importuned to grant permission to Herod to take the lives of his children, he said, "It is better to be Herod's hog, than his son," for his religion would not allow him to slaughter the former. He was married to no less than ten wives, by most of whom he had no children. He died in great agony about B.C. 4. His disease was of an excruciating and loathsome kind. He knew the Jews would not lament his death, so he thought of a plan to give them cause for grief. He sent orders throughout Judea requiring the presence of the chief men of the nation at Jericho, and when they arrived he had them thrown into prison. Then summoning his sister, Salome, and her husband to his bedside, he said to them: "My life is now short. I know the Jewish people, and nothing will please them better than my death. You have their chief men now in your custody. As soon as the breath is out of my body and before my death can be known, do you let in the soldiers upon them and slay them. All Judea then and every family will, however unwillingly, bewail my death." Josephus says that "with tears in his eyes he conjured them by their love to him and their *fidelity to God,* not to fail in securing this honor to his death." Salome, his sister, who already had so much on her conscience, spared herself this latest guilt, and the Jewish princes were released and participated no doubt in this magnificent funeral. He died in the seventieth year of his age and in the thirty-seventh of his reign.

Antipas and Archelaus were both sons of Herod the Great, and their mother's name was Malthace. These sons were educated at Rome. Antipas was at first named in his will as Herod's successor. Before he died, kindlier thoughts seemed to have prevailed in his mind, and he transferred that dignity to Archelaus, leaving to Antipas the government of Galilee and Perea with the title of tetrarch. He entered upon his government in the year B.C. 4,

supposed to be about seventeen years of age. He first turned his attention to the repairing of his kingdom and the security of his throne. He fortified the town of Sepphoris and made it the capital and the ornament of his kingdom. Having secured his northern frontier, he turned his attention to Perea, which was exposed to the Arabs about half way down the eastern edge of the Dead Sea. Amid the precipitous cliffs and peaks of that region he strengthened the fortress of Macherus by high walls and towers, adding a residence for himself within its boundaries. It had been badly broken down by the Romans in the Asmonean war. He allied himself to the Arab prince Aretas, by marrying his daughter.

On the banishment of Archelaus, Antipas tried to get from Augustus his father's former dominions as a whole. But Judea was annexed to Syria. Later on he gained favor with Tiberius. Becoming tired of his first capital, he concluded to build a new one overlooking the Sea of Galilee, near the hot springs. It was planned in Roman style, and in honor of the emperor was called Tiberias. It proved to be an unhealthful place, traces of a former burial ground were discovered, and the rabbis pronounced it unclean. Antipas paid no attention to these complaints, but filled the houses of the new city with every one who would take them. A prejudice always remained against the town, but in spite of this, Herod transferred his residence here and lavishly decorated his palace with heathen ornaments. "The city was adorned besides with Grecian colonnades and marble statues, and even at this day ruins of fine buildings strew the beach."

When Pilate was procurator he removed his army from Cæsarea to Jerusalem, but the Roman standards had images on them and the Jewish people rebelled. He threatened the opposers with death, but this only strengthened their determination to resist. Pilate was compelled to yield and the standards were taken back. Probably about the year A.D. 26, wishing to see how far he could go, he consecrated some gilt shields, inscribed simply with the name of the deity and the donor. They were a kind of votive tablet, and took their name from having been vowed beforehand, in case a divine favor earnestly desired should be granted. On these now hung up, Pilate inscribed his own name and that of Tiberius, but the Jews denounced them and clamored to have them removed. The letter of the law might not be against these

shields, but homage was paid them and they were therefore an abomination. About this time the family of Herod had gathered for a family feast in Jerusalem. Pilate referred the matter of shields to the emperor, and a deputation was sent to Rome. It so happened that Antipas had business at Rome, and as he set out about the time of the deputation, the people fondly supposed he had gone to Rome to aid their cause against Pilate. He was at this very time planning a violation of the law while apparently very zealous to uphold it.

Herod-Philip was the son of Herod the Great and of the second Mariamne, a handsome woman of the day, whose father, an Alexandrian Jew, had been made high priest in honor of Herod's marriage to his daughter. This son was excluded from all the benefits of his father's will for the supposed treason of the mother. He had married Herodias, the granddaughter of his father. The uncle had thus married his niece, but such unnatural relationships were no uncommon thing in the family of the Herods. At present he was no doubt living an easy, aimless life as a private citizen in Jerusalem, which fact did not seem to please his more ambitious wife. When Antipas came to Jerusalem to attend the family feast, he was entertained by Philip, his half brother. The latter must have been a man approaching fifty years of age, while the wife may have been thirty-five or older. They had a daughter, Salome, an only child, afterward married to Philip, the tetrarch of Iturea, who was the brother of Antipas. This handsome, restless, ambitious Herodias, who no doubt preferred to intrigue with a crown prince rather than bear the ills of private life, began to plan for the conquest of the new visitor. Cruel, crafty, and voluptuous like his father, he was most likely an easy victim. Although he had long been married to the daughter of Aretas, a powerful neighbor east of the Dead Sea, he soon found himself entangled in a wicked intrigue with the wife of his generous-hearted brother. The final result was that she promised to leave her husband and come to him, as soon as he returned from Rome, provided he divorced his first wife.

In due time he is back from Rome. In some manner the wife of Antipas learned of his proposed treachery, and determined to leave him. She manifested her desire to visit the fortress Macherus, which had formerly belonged to the Herods but which

at this time her father seems to have controlled. It later came back into the hands of Antipas again. She possibly proposed to visit the springs which at that time were quite famous. She had previously written to her father, and he had taken steps to carry her away. She was conducted from one post to another by the generals of Aretas, until she reached the family palace at Petra. She told her father all, and he annulled the marriage. Herodias in the meantime had left her husband and had come to the royal palace at Tiberias.

"Everything combined to make this act as detestable as it was ungrateful and treacherous. The sole temptation on his side was an impotent sensuality, on hers an extravagant ambition. From this minute began for Herod Antipas a series of annoyances and misfortunes which only culminated in his death, afterwards in discrowned royalty and unpitied exile. Herodias became from the first the evil genius of his house. The people were scandalized and outraged. Family dissensions were embittered." The curse of childlessness denounced by the law on such a crime was fulfilling itself. The father of his repudiated wife threatened war because of the insult to his daughter. After long and fierce wrangling, it finally broke into an open hostility, and Antipas was so badly beaten and his army so dreadfully shattered that he appealed to the emperor and was kept on the throne by his support. The Jews thought the destruction of his army was a punishment sent from God upon him because of his wickedness.

For a time Antipas and his adulterous wife seemed to have things their own way; but while within the walls of their gilded palace they may live their sensual lives without fear of the indignation of their own subjects, there is a voice they cannot thrust out—the voice of a guilty conscience. In the case of Antipas his conscience had lately troubled him more than ever. He hears of a remarkable man going up and down the Jordan, with an ascetic bearing, clothed in his desert raiment, the hairy cloth and leathern girdle, a second Elijah in power, who was calling upon the people to repent and turn away from their sins, for the kingdom of God is at hand. Crowds of men from all parts of the land, representing all classes from the highest to the lowest, gather to hear this man who speaks the simple truth to all and who fears the face of none. He claims simply to be a "voice" in the wilderness. Anti-

pas will of course hear of this wonderful man, but where and how he first met him we do not know. Josephus says that this man was arrested and imprisoned because Antipas feared that the crowds, which had been attracted by his preaching, might be used for revolutionary purposes. While this may have been the pretext, the probability is that the Gospels give us the true reason. The preacher may have first sought the abode of the king, and Herod, having a curiosity to hear such a man, may have invited him to come and visit and talk before him. As the guilt of this man had been known and freely talked among his subjects, John of course is familiar with the history of the great crime which they had both committed. Arrayed in his prophet's garb, coming from the desert, in the earnestness and sincerity of a man who is called of God to a great work, he must have presented a wonderful contrast to the licentious, indolent, pleasure-loving people who were accustomed to tread these marble floors. Antipas may have hoped to obtain John's sanction, or at least his acquiescence in what he had done; and if so, he would fare better with the people, for they held the prophet in the greatest esteem. But he mistook his man. He had been predestined to preach the truth clearly, plainly, forcibly, and the truth must be preached without regard to the social standing of the hearers. He was not his own but God's prophet, and therefore he could not cringe the knee to those in royal position or say honeyed words to soothe men's evil consciences. "For John had said unto Herod, It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife."

Herod himself might have passed over a statement like that, severe as it was, with the hope that on further acquaintance he might conciliate John; but the blood of the ambitious Herodias must have boiled at such a plain, bold, courageous statement of her wickedness. As long as this man lives he will keep before her the memory of her wicked deed, and she must do her best to silence such a plain-spoken tongue as that, even if he must surrender his life. With the influence which she had over Antipas, she may have prevailed on him, even against his own wishes, to have put him to death, but he had a well-founded fear that the effects of so atrocious a deed on such a man might have a disastrous result on a people already indignant at such wickedness. He thrust him into prison, in part probably to protect him from the evil designs

HEAD OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

of his own wife, but made his imprisonment as bearable as possible. "For Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and holy, and he kept him safe, and when he heard him he did many things and heard him gladly."

For a time Antipas stood between his prisoner and the Jezebel who thirsted for his death, and protected him. The Baptist had no reason to apprehend any immediate danger from Herod. There might be some hope even that by intercourse with John, hearing and conversing with him, he might possibly be aroused to his condition and be led to do better. But Herodias hated him as she had reason to do. She was even worse than Jezebel of old, for Elijah escaped her vengeance, but John did not escape his enemy. Suppose Herod should put her away as John advised, where was she to go? She could not return to her former husband, and she must therefore be an outcast. There will be nothing left for her but shame and disgrace. She could not run any such risk. Herod had respect for John and reverence, possibly mingled with fear. "Though in his palace, surrounded with his royal guards, Herod feared him. He knew the Baptist was stronger than he, for truth is mighty and mightily prevaileth. He feared this righteous man whose words gave such edge to his self accusations, such point to his remorse. Unarmed, the Baptist daunted him more than an army of men, an embattled city, or a fenced tower, or any other source of physical and outward force." Herodias found nothing attractive in him. If he succeeds in his purpose, she will be banished from the royal palace, a disgraced and ruined woman. Her hatred goes straight to the mark, and nothing is allowed to stand in its way. The only safe thing for her to do is to secure his death; for, while he lives, her peace and comfort will be constantly threatened. How to reach this result is no doubt the uppermost thought for months in this woman's mind.

After patiently nursing her wrath for some time, at last her opportunity comes. Antipas had the good fortune to keep his throne over thirty years, and had been accustomed to celebrate the anniversary of his accession to the throne each season by a splendid banquet. The time had again come for such an anniversary, and he arranges to serve at Macherus a banquet for his courtiers and generals and Galilean nobles. His wife will see to it that this is the grandest event of his reign. The windows would

be illuminated and hung with flowers. The tables would be spread with every luxury, and wine will flow freely. With the fondness of these kings for display, there would be nothing wanting to such a banquet, which wealth or royalty could possibly procure. His wife, ostensibly to honor her lord, but in reality to accomplish her own wicked purpose, will do what she can to make it a magnificent success.

"Herodias had craftily provided the king with an unexpected and exciting pleasure, the spectacle of which will be sure to enrapture such guests as his. Dances and dancing women were at that time in great regard. A luxurious feast of the period was not regarded as complete unless it closed with some gross, pantomimic representation, and doubtless Herod had adopted the evil fashion of his day. . . . The dancing then in vogue, both in Rome and the provinces, was very like that of our modern ballet. The dancer did not speak, but acted some story by gestures, movements, and attitudes to the sound of music. Masks were used in all cases to conceal the features, but all other parts of the body, especially the hands and arms, were called into action. The dress of the performer, like that of the dancers in our own ballet, was planned to show the beauty of the figure to the greatest advantage. . . . Herod had not anticipated for his guests the rare luxury of seeing a princess, his own niece, a granddaughter of Herod the Great and of Mariamne, a descendant therefore of Simon the high priest and the great line of Maccabean princes—a princess who afterwards became the wife of a tetrarch and the mother of a king—honoring them by degrading herself into a scenic dancer."

"No doubt the favorable moment was watched by Herodias, when the tetrarch and his boon companions had reached the stage at which evil passions can be most easily blown into flame. Then the girl is introduced, in her youth and beauty, and executed with bewitching grace the part for which she had been trained. The sight of one so nearly related to himself appearing in the position of a dancing girl or play actress ought to have filled Herod with shame and indignation; but the dare-devil sauciness and the abandonment of a princess completely carried away the half-intoxicated men, who looked on spellbound and broke out into wild applause; and the tetrarch, entirely losing control of himself, roared out a promise to give her any present she might ask, even

to the half of his kingdom." And yet, poor fool that he was, he could not give away the humblest village without the permission of Tiberius the emperor.

One writer tells us that the mother had expected something of this kind and had instructed the daughter beforehand what to do. If this had been done the girl once more goes to consult her mother, to learn if she were still of the same mind. Half a kingdom had been promised her. What could she not have had with such wealth—palaces, jewelry, apparel, everything a girl could wish! But the mother had other thoughts, and had trained the girl to hate when she hated. The mother now has a chance to wreak vengeance on the faithful "voice" which had proclaimed her sin, had annoyed her day by day and in her dreams by night, and who had sought to take her husband away from her. What an apt pupil the daughter had been! "And she came in straightway *with haste* [what a revelation is that!] to the king and said, Give me here in a charger the head of John the Baptist." What a dreadful petition for a girl to make or a mother to allow! John is not only to lose his head, but the bleeding trophy is to be brought to her; it must be brought there where she now is, that not only she but the lords who were present might know that the vow which they had heard the king make, they now see kept. It must not be brought in any careless way, not held by the hair, not in a napkin, but on a dish, so that she may have it herself, in her own hands, without soiling her fine clothes, and thus take it to her mother or wherever she pleased.

Herod saw as soon as the words had been uttered that he had been entrapped by the wicked woman who was dragging him down to ruin. By his reckless promise he had intended no such wickedness as this. For a moment the life of the Baptist hangs in a balance. The king knew it was a wrong thing to grant, and he "was sorry." This has sobered him in part; and as his conscience begins to work, will he let his manhood prevail? Had he possessed the courage of his prisoner he would have done the right thing, would have broken his rash promise and saved the life of a righteous man. "If a single touch of manliness had been left in him he would have repudiated the request as one which did not fall either under the letter or spirit of his oath, since the life of one cannot be made the gift to another; or he would have boldly

declared at once that if such were her choice, his oath was more honored by being broken than by being kept. But a despicable pride and fear of man prevailed over his better impulses. More afraid of the criticisms of his guests than of the future torment of such conscience as was left him, he immediately sent an executioner to the prison, which in all probability was not far from the banqueting hall; and so at the bidding of a dissolute coward and to please the loathly fancies of a shameless girl, the ax fell and the head of the noblest of the prophets was shorn away."

We know nothing of the tragedy inside the prison. While the dreadful revelling is going on in the chambers above and a human life is being bartered away to gratify the revenge of a wicked woman, John is resting quietly below, at peace with God, and unconscious of the fate that is awaiting him. During all these months he has been kept within prison walls because he was loyal to the truth. He was still young, not much more than thirty years of age. "The pulses of life were strong in him. He had been arrested in the midst of a great work, and much he must have felt, as every true worker for God and man feels, was yet to be done. Had he still a great doubt which he was yearning to have solved before leaving the world?" If any one was present to witness the quick work of the executioner, his lips were sealed, for no report has come to us. It was nothing to the executioner, who was simply fulfilling the order of his king. He emerges from the prison cell carrying by the hair the head of a noble man and places it on a dish. There is a story that when Herodias saw it, she drew forth the still warm tongue that had rebuked her crimes and revengefully transfixed it with her bodkin. Tradition says that, pleased that she had at last been avenged, Herodias ordered the headless body to be flung out over the battlements for the dogs to devour. His own disciples, who had been hoping for his release, found his mutilated body and buried it in the sands of the desert, a fit resting place for the man whom the world had treated so unkindly, as it always treats its prophets. Into that lonely grave went tears of affection, and with that body they buried many of their hopes. Did they ask themselves the question, Might not the Messiah, had he been so disposed, have saved their master's life? Were they able to solve the problem why so good and so courageous a man should be so quickly cut off when in the midst of a

glorious work, by a king so wicked as Antipas, aided by a woman so devilish is Herodias? As they turned away from the grave, no doubt the earth seemed vacant and the very sky above as brass, but they did as thousands of troubled hearts who have been in similar grief have done since, "they went and told Jesus."

But the end was not yet. So great a crime shall not go unpunished. Often in this life and certainly in the other the penalty comes. From that day forward until his dying hour, that dissevered head was not absent from Herod's imagination. Not long after this, when he hears of another prophet who is doing greater work than John did, his conscience is filled with superstitious dread, and he says to those near him, "This is John the Baptist whom I beheaded; he is risen from the dead, and therefore these mighty works are wrought by him." "Had John sprung to life again thus suddenly to inflict a signal vengeance? Would he come to the strong towers of Macherus at the head of a multitude in wild revolt? Would he glide through the gilded halls of Julias or Tiberias, terrible at midnight with ghastly tread?"

The mad ambition of Herodias finally led to the ruin of her husband. When Caligula began to heap favors on Herod Agrippa I., she urged her husband to sail for Rome to secure some of the favors which were going to her brother. She was anxious he should secure the title of king in place of that of tetrarch. He saw danger in such a request, but she insisted and, against his better judgment, he yielded. Agrippa not only discouraged his scheme, but sent a freed man to Rome to accuse Antipas of treasonable design." He failed to clear himself of the charge, and in A.D. 33 he was banished to Lugdunum not far from the Spanish frontier. Herodias, from choice or necessity, or maybe in despair, accompanied him in his exile, and here they both died in obscurity and dishonor.

From this sad history we may pause long enough to draw two important lessons. The first is that our modern fashionable dance is exceedingly dangerous and should be avoided. "Let it be observed that the social dancing of modern Europe which has been transferred to America is neither Jewish, religious, nor simply calisthenic as to its origin, but is a daughter of the Roman dance which was ever associated with licentiousness. The Greeks had cultivated the art of dancing with an extravagant passion, and

were the first to introduce higher dances into the theater; the Romans followed their example and thus fixed a stigma on what had before been deemed a sacred right or an innocent recreation. Before Christianity was known in Rome, the respectable portion of society frowned on dances. Cicero objected against a senator that he had fallen from the dignity of his station by being seen to dance; and the satires of Juvenal prove that in a succeeding age these amusements had shamefully depraved the public manners. At different times the Roman government under Tiberius and Domitian passed decrees against them. Of course we need not wonder that the writings of the early Christians abound with sharp invectives against a public amusement on which pagan moralists themselves had stamped the impress of dishonor."

Dr. A. T. Pierson, a pastor who has had no little experience, uses the following strong language in a letter to his young parishioners: "The modern round dance is to me especially abhorrent; for one I will not put myself where I am compelled even to look at it. I am too well acquainted both with its origin and its history to countenance it; and after watching for twenty-five years its effect upon modern society, I have set my face forever against it as an iniquity and a snare. True, it did not have its origin in pagan idolatry, but it did have its origin in a worse than pagan laxity of morals; and the fact that pure-minded persons may possibly engage in it with entire innocence of wrong feeling or intent, proves nothing as to its influence to society in general.

"Now, let me ask you, if you had a family of children, how long would you tolerate in your house a man, who, perhaps immediately upon introduction to your daughter, should lay hands upon her person with the familiarity and freedom of the modern waltz? I am simply astonished that there can be any doubt upon this point with sound-minded, sensible, reflecting persons. The modern dance simply licenses or makes lawful what, outside of the customs of the dance, is regarded improper, immoral, insulting. Society wisely regulates the ordinary social gatherings of men and women in the parlor, even when they are well acquainted, by certain wholesome barriers of restraint. A man who, especially at first acquaintance, should violate these restrictions, as he may do in the waltz with impunity, would be kicked out of doors as a scoundrel. But the devil has invented in the round

dances, a polite and popular method of making such gross familiarities allowable under the sanctions of fashionable custom. Hence their attraction to the people of the world; hence their ensnaring influence to the disciple; and the better the class of men and women that countenance the devil's dance, the more conspicuous his triumph."

The other lesson is the wrongfulness of solemnly swearing to keep or to do that of which at the time we can have no possible knowledge. This king, inflamed by wine, solemnly swore that whatever the lewd girl asked should be given her, if it took half his kingdom. Of course, he had no idea that such a request would be made, but before he took the oath, he should have considered all the possibilities of the case. Such an oath should not have been made. The keeping of it required murder. When he saw this, he should have refused to comply, and should have repudiated an oath which, in his purpose, did not include any such thing. A thoughtful man who wants to do what is right will take no oath which obligates him to do or to keep something which has not been revealed to him. For when it is revealed, he may find that the keeping of it will lead him, as it did Herod Antipas, to wrongdoing. In short, the fewer oaths men take, except such as are provided for by civil law, which simply obligates men to tell the truth and are not of the blind kind to which reference has been made, the better for them and for society at large.

The Woman of Samaria— an Early Missionary

"Oh, dwarfed and wronged and stained with ill,
Behold! Thou art a woman still!
And, by that sacred name and dear,
I bid thy better self appear.
Still, through thy foul disguise, I see
The rudimental purity,
That, spite of change and loss, makes good
Thy birthright-claim of womanhood;
And inward loathing, deep, intense,
A shame that is half innocence.
Cast off the grave-clothes of thy sin,
Rise from the dust thou liest in,
As Mary rose at Jesus' word,
Redeemed and white before the Lord!
Reclaim thy lost soul! In his name
Rise up, and break thy bonds of shame.
Art weak? He's strong. Art fearful? Hear
The world's O'ercomer; be of cheer.
What lip shall judge when he approves?
Who dare to scorn the child he loves?"

—*John G. Whittier.*

The Woman of Samaria—an Early Missionary

JESUS had spent some nine months in Judea, and saw that the bigoted, religious Jews about Jerusalem were watching him with an unfriendly eye. He may have seemed to them a rival even more dangerous than John the Baptist, for his cleansing the temple and his other miracles had given him more power over the people. There was, as yet, no open hostility, nor was he disposed to provoke any, for his work was not yet done. His own popularity would arouse the envy of the Baptist's disciples, and his disregard of ceremonial customs might awaken their suspicions, and the Pharisees would be quick to stimulate both. So Christ withdrew in order to forestall any danger of rupture or conflict, showing an example for all Christian workers to follow. Thus far he seemed to himself to have been doing little more than sowing by the wayside, on stony places, or among thistles and thorns. A locality had claims on him, not on account of the crowds who came to see his miracles, but by the numbers who were won to God through his teaching.

He will go into Galilee where he will find the people not so bound by ritual and form as in Judea, and therefore more disposed to hear the simple truth. His own people usually preferred the circuitous route by way of Perea, east of the Jordan, rather than through Samaria, settled by a people whom they hated. There was, in part, a justifiable reason for the odium which attached to the term "Samaritan" in the mind of punctilious Jews. The origin of this dated back many years, but the bitterness had been nursed from one generation to another. When the ten tribes had been captured and most of them carried off by Shalmaneser, a heathen colony had been sent in to take the place of these exiled Israelites. These colonists suffered from the devastations of wild beasts, and acting on the common assumptions of that time that their own gods were not competent to take care of them in a strange land, sent for and received priests of Israel to teach them the manner of the God of Palestine. The result was

a mixed religion, partly Jewish, partly heathen. The conduct of these Samaritans increased the antagonism between them and the Jews. They became open opponents of the rebuilding of the temple after the captivity. Finally they secured permission to build a rival temple at Gerizim, and Samaria became the rival of Jerusalem, and the rallying point of its foes and outlaws. To a rival temple and religion they added a Samaritan pentateuch, which, it is now generally conceded, has an antiquity greater than any other in existence. Of these people, about one hundred and fifty still worship in a little synagogue in the town of Nablus, at the foot of Gerizim, the oldest and smallest sect in the world. In 1881, the writer had the privilege of looking into this temple, examining this ancient manuscript, and spending a little time in conversation with the rabbi.

Christ must have started in the early morning to reach Sychar at noon, and so it must have been located near the boundary line. Usually the road was not a safe one, for along this border line the feuds of the two peoples would rage more fiercely. Josephus tells us that pilgrims from Galilee were often molested and sometimes attacked and scattered with more or less slaughter. The large plain which he traversed coming from the south, must in that day have been very fertile. We saw farmers at work, plowing with their oxen, and there was no reason except imperfect cultivation, why they should not have a good crop. In that day "rich level stretches of black soil, overflowed in the wet season, form splendid pastures, which alternate in the valleys with fertile tracts of corn land, gardens, and orchards. Grape vines and many kinds of fruit trees cover the warm slopes of the limestone hills, and groves of olives and walnuts crown their rounded tops. The meadows of Samaria have always been famous. The prophets already speak of the pastures on its downs and of the thickets of its still forests. As Josephus tells us, the supply of rain was abundant on the hills and made them richly wooded. The climate was so good and healthy that the Romans greatly preferred the military stations in Samaria to those in Judea.

Jesus was on the way to Shechem, the ancient name for that which is known as Nablus to-day. It is at present a town of several thousand people, and a dirty, filthy place. It was handsomely located, and the Master would not be blind to the beauties of the

landscape around him. About him he would see groves of walnut, almond, and pomegranate, while olive, pear, and plum trees adorned the outskirts of the town. The weather was bright and warm, and the woods would be filled with the songs of the birds. The brooks of fresh, clear water, then as now, would play and splash and murmur as they went by. Thousands of flowers adorned the grass on the slopes. This was his Father's world, his own world, and the beauty and loveliness of the landscape about him were in striking contrast to the spiritual death which everywhere prevailed.

Tired with his long walk, as it was midday, and oppressed probably by the heat of the Syrian sun, which is warm even in December, Jesus turns aside from the beaten path and sat himself down to rest by what was then and is still called, Jacob's well. Whether Jacob dug the well or not, or whether his name was subsequently given to it by tradition, is not known. The purchase of the ground by him is described in the thirty-third chapter of Genesis. It is not even known why it should have been dug at all. There is an abundance of fountains in that region, and the most probable reason for it would be to take away every occasion for dispute, between Jacob and his descendants and the people around him. It is at present some seventy-five feet deep, but must have been much deeper, as it is the custom of travelers and others who visit it to cast in a stone to determine if there is any water, and to form some idea of its depth. To have digged it originally was no easy task, for it is about seven and one-half feet in diameter, and is lined throughout with strong, rough masonry. At one time in our era, a church stood over it, and not many years since there was still to be seen the remains of an alcove, built to give a seat and shelter to the tired traveler. The associations of this place were many and sacred. In this region the Lord first appeared to Abraham; Jacob built here his first altar; here Joseph sought his brother in vain; Joshua rehearsed the law with its blessings and cursings, and amidst the loud amens of the assembled people; and here Joseph was buried in the land that belonged to his father, Jacob.

While Jesus tarried there to rest, his disciples went to Sychar, a village in sight, to procure some provisions. The funds supplied by friends who desired to minister to him, furnished the

necessary means. While resting there, a woman from this same Sychar approached, with a water jar on her head, as is the custom, and a long cord in her hand, with which to let the jar down into the well. The evening was the usual time for drawing water, and hence when she came at noon, she and Jesus were alone at the well. To ask for a drink of water in that warm climate is no unusual thing, and ordinarily no one would think of refusing. To any other, the woman no doubt would have granted it without a moment's hesitation, but the dress and language of this man showed that he was a Jew, and she remembered that the two nations had no dealings with each other. Jesus had asked a favor of her, thus placing himself under obligations. It was a surprise to her, and she hesitated. Finally she says to him, "How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans." That was a fair question, for the Jews had been very arbitrary in their treatment of this people. According to their traditions, "no Israelite could lawfully eat even a mouthful of food that had been touched by a Samaritan; no Samaritan was allowed to become a proselyte, nor could he have any part in the resurrection of the dead. The testimony of a Samaritan could not be taken in a Jewish court, and to receive one into one's house would bring down the curse of God. It had even become a subject of warm controversy how far a Jew might use food or fruit grown on Samaritan soil."

Jesus meets her frankness with as frank a statement on his part. He wishes to lift her thoughts beyond the mere wants of the body; he wants to provoke her to make further inquiry of him. By a natural transition he tells her of living water, the gift of God, and which he has to give. It is so precious that if she knew what it was, and who it was that offered, she would have asked to be permitted to drink. He meant, of course, the divine grace and truth which will satisfy every thinking soul. This was intended to arrest her attention, and so it did. She at first does not get beyond the mere literal sense, for she replies, "You cannot mean the water in the well here; you cannot give me that, for you have nothing to draw with; whence then can you get this living water of which you speak? Are you greater than our father, Jacob, who gave us the well? It was good enough for

CHRIST AND THE SAMARITAN WOMAN

him and his to drink from, and you speak as if you had other and better water." The curiosity of the woman is now thoroughly aroused. Jesus replies, "This water in this well is no doubt good, as you say, but every one who drinks it thirsts again; whereas he who drinks the water that I will give, will never thirst, but will find it like a well of water in his soul, springing up into everlasting life."

"As the body thirsts and is contented with water, so there is for all unanswered yearnings, for unsatisfied desires, for all that restlessness and craving of feeling, for the thirst of the soul, a living water which shall quiet them; not as water quiets the body that thirsts again in an hour, but with an abiding and eternal satisfaction. That is indeed that 'gift of God' which, had she known, would have made her suppliant to him. Even yet, how few know it. How few among Christian believers have entered into that rest of soul, that trust and love which comes from the divine spirit, and which, when once the Holy Spirit has fully shined upon and brought sunrise to the soul, will never depart from it, but will be an eternal joy. None of this, however, did she understand. Perhaps while Christ was speaking, she revolved in her mind the convenience of the new sort of water which this man spoke of, and what a treasure it would be, if, when the summer came on, she need not trudge wearily to this well. At any rate she seems to have replied in a business-like spirit, 'Sir, give me this water that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw.' There are many like her who would be glad of such a divine gift of religion, as should take away all the labor and trouble of a Christian life. 'That I come not hither to draw' is the desire of thousands who want the results of right living without the trouble of living right."

Having this woman's attention, it is now time to bring home the truth more pointedly to her conscience. As the first step towards granting her request, Jesus says to her directly, "Go, call thy husband." There must have been something either in the tone or the manner that startled her, for she seems for the moment to be thrown off her guard. This looks like a break in the conversation, but it is really the first step in granting the woman's request. Before she can have this water of life, there must be conviction of sin. Instead of evading this question, as would

have been perfectly natural, she hastily replies, as if with some sense of shame, "I have no husband." Then came, like a well-aimed arrow, the words of Christ, "Thou hast well said, I have no husband: for thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: in that saidst thou truly." She had, no doubt, lived with the five, and been separated from them, some by death and others by divorce. Her present relations were evidently illegal. Christ's rebuke was severe in fact, but gentle in form. He shows a full knowledge of her sin, but commends her for her truth-telling disposition.

The woman is confused for a moment. She expected no such revelation of her past life. It is only for a moment, for such as she must be nimble in thought and not be caught asleep. "Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet." This was a hasty conclusion, but it turned the former statement into a compliment to himself rather than a reminder of shame to her. And now, like all sinners when hard-pressed along the line of personal duty, she is quick to bring up the old relations of Jews and Samaritans. She is not the first who has been more concerned with questions of theoretical theology than with those of practical duty. "Our fathers worshiped in this mountain." Right before them on Mt. Gerizim the temple was seen blazing in the midday sun. Jesus permits her for a moment to change the subject. He has awakened her by the truth to a sense of sin, and her own conscience will press its claims. No matter when or where or how the soul seeks God, if it only seeks him in spirit and in truth.

It is possible that this woman really did desire from this man his opinion on the momentous question of where to worship. This was in some sense a very important matter to her. Her worship had ceased to be the offering of the heart, and had become a superstition of place and methods. This was in good part true of the Jews also. It would be a matter of no little value in their relation to the Jews to have the opinion of a man so well informed as this one and who did not seem to be prejudiced towards her nation as were most of the Jews. "Gerizim was their sacred mountain and had been, as they believed, the seat of Paradise, while all the streams that water the earth were supposed to flow from it. Adam had been formed of its dust and had lived upon it. Every Samaritan child of the neighborhood could point out the places on it

where Noah came out from the ark and where he built his altar, and could show the seven altar steps on each of which Noah offered a sacrifice. The altar on which Abraham bound Isaac, and the spot where the ram was caught in the thicket, were among its wonders. In the center of the summit was the broad stone on which Jacob rested his head when he saw the mystical ladder, and near it the spot where Joshua built the first altar in the land after its conquest, and the twelve stones he set up, on the under side of which they believed the law of Moses had been written. On this sacred ground their temple had stood for two hundred years, till destroyed by the Jews a hundred and twenty-nine years before Christ." This simple Samaritan woman with whom Jesus was now talking had been trained to believe all these legends, and her mention of Jerusalem as a possible place of worship shows that she was willing to be taught.

There was no narrow intolerance in the heart of Christ, and although of Jewish nationality, he had a kindly feeling for the Samaritans, maybe in part because they seemed to be an outcast race. He chose a Samaritan to illustrate the law of love to one's neighbor. It was a Samaritan alone of the ten lepers who were healed that returned to give thanks; and now it is a Samaritan woman who seems to be opening her heart to his words, after he experienced the cold unbelief of Judea. The plain all about him is filled with precious memories of his ancestors. A divine enthusiasm seems to have filled his soul as he sees in vision the time when the local, the national, the transitory in religion will have passed away before the universal, the spiritual, the eternal. "Believe me," said he, "an hour comes when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what; we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him."

"Words like these marked an epoch in the spiritual history of the world, a revolution in all previous ideas of the relation of man to his maker. The worth of man's homage to God does not depend on the place where it is paid. The true worship has its temple in the inmost soul, in the spirit and heart. It is the life of the soul; it is communion with God. Religion was henceforth no tribal

privilege jealously kept within the narrow bounds of mere nationality. The veil of the temple was rent at Jacob's well, and he who, till then, as men thought, dwelt only in the narrow limits of the chamber it shrouded, went forth thence from this hour to consecrate all the earth as one great holy of holies. Samaritans, heathen, Jews, were henceforth proclaimed children of a common Heavenly Father, and Jesus, when he presently claimed to be the Messiah, announced himself as the *Savior of the world.*"

The answer which he gave to this woman's inquiry, "was not in the spirit of the Greek philosophy which was the parent of skepticism, nor in the Oriental spirit which was full of superstition, nor in the Roman spirit which was essentially worldly and religious, and far less did it breathe the contemporary Jewish spirit, whether of Pharisee or of Sadducee. It expresses the renunciation of the senses in worship. It throws back upon the heart and soul of every one, whoever he may be, the whole office of worship. It is the first gleam of the new morning. No longer in this nest alone, nor in that, shall religion be looked for, but escaping from its shell, heard in all the earth, in notes the same in every language, flying unrestrained and free, the whole heavens shall be its sphere and the whole earth its home."

The woman seems to have been made dizzy by the very sublimity of this discourse. Her question was answered, and yet more than this was told her; as between the Jews and the Samaritans, the Jews were right; but neither theory was absolutely vital. She was interested in this stranger's discourses, but how can she give up the faith of her fathers in which she had been born and bred? She is perplexed, but relieves herself by saying, "I know that the Messiah cometh; when he is come, he will tell us all things." These things which perplex and puzzle us now will all be made clear and plain then. The woman's wish to know the truth and her yearning for the coming of the Messiah, revealed a frame of mind ready for further light. "You need not wait," said he, "I that speak unto thee am he." The first revelation of the Savior was to the humble shepherds. The first announcement of himself as the Messiah was to a Samaritan woman. He did not until a much later period declare his Messiahship to his own disciples. His doing so in this case took away sin from this woman and made her a missionary of the Messiah. The fact that she was an

uninfluential woman and a Samaritan may have made him more ready to reveal himself at this time. At that moment came the disciples and the conversation was interrupted. We have never ceased to wish their return had been delayed a little, for the conversation had reached a pitch of intense interest, and we wonder what the next response would have been.

The disciples found him talking with this woman, which was in violation of the customs of the age. He was a rabbi, and it was indecorous for them to speak to a woman, much more a Samaritan woman; but "no man said, Why talkest thou with her?" for his manner and bearing checked all familiarity. They asked him to eat, but his soul was full of other thoughts which so absorbed him that hunger was driven away. "I have food to eat that ye know not of," could suggest nothing to them, except that in their absence some one had brought him food. Seeing their misconception of his meaning he says, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work."

Whether the woman gave him the asked-for drink, the record does not state. She is so surprised when she hears from this man's lips that he is the Messiah, that, forgetting her water-pot in her excitement, she starts back into the village to communicate the good news to others. She did not say, "Come and see the Christ," for of that she could not be sure, but "Come, see a man which told me all the things that ever I did." This she could know, and yet he had told her of but one thing. "There are certain experiences, however, which stand for the whole of one's life. It may be a great love, or a great defeat, or a great crime, or a measureless sorrow, or a joy lost irrecoverably; whatever it may be, there are experiences which epitomize our whole life and represent to our memory the very substance of life, everything besides being incidental and accessory. It was not his words alone, but with these there was a judicial solemnity, a piercing eye that seemed to her to search her very soul, a manner which showed that he sorrowed for her while he was exposing her career. And yet she had lived unabashed and content with herself. The whole narrative shows a woman not wholly sunk in evil, careful yet of appearances, a woman quick of thought, fertile in expedients and possessed of much natural force. Love had not taught her delicacy or purity. One does not think pleasantly of five successive marriages, and is

not surprised that her last choice had not even the pretense of marriage."

The citizens of the village heard the invitation of this pleasure-seeking woman, and rushed out to see the man who had told her so many wonderful things. He pointed them out to his disciples as they came across the cornfields now tinged with green, and in the higher sense showed how these Samaritan fields were already, in part by the effort of this woman, white for the harvest. And when these Samaritans had come unto this Jew, one of the hated race whom they were taught to despise, they surrounded him and with entreaties they besought him that he would come home and tarry with them. For two days he remained with this people. What he said and did has not been recorded for us, but we do know that he who never let an opportunity go by unimproved, would do the very best for them he possibly could. His work was more successful here than in Judea, for many believed on him. Some were aroused by the enthusiasm of the woman, but others were satisfied from his own teaching that he was indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world. We do not know that he wrought any miracles among them, but they accepted the truth he taught, and the truth made them free. "Though right from Jerusalem and from the temple, to the horror of every rightminded Pharisee, he accepted the hospitality of the Samaritans, slept under their roofs, ate at their tables, taught in their streets, and altogether treated them as if they were as good as Jews."

One of the most touching things in this whole story is the humane manner of his treatment of a sinning woman. "He knew her tainted life. He knew that the whole world smiles upon the act of degrading a woman, and that the whole world puts the double sin upon her alone, hardly esteeming her paramour guilty at all but counting her sin utterly unforgivable. He who afterwards declared, 'the publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of God before you,' here made it manifest that sin does not remove the sinner from divine sympathy and love. Christ treated not this careless, shrewd, dexterous woman of the world with scorn or bitter rebuke. He made himself her companion. That which was divine in him had fellowship with that which was human in her. His soul went out to her, not as a fire to consume, but as a purifying flame. This experience was a fit prelude to his now opening

public life. It was the text from which flowed two distinguishing elements of his ministry—sympathy for mankind, and the tenderest compassion for those who have sinned and stumbled. It revealed God's heart, sent the prophetic beam of reconciliation to each soul, and was the promise of that one family in Christ Jesus that was to comprise every nation and people on the globe."

The story also reveals to us Christ's method of saving souls. "Though wearied he does not neglect the occasion and opportunity afforded him; he commences the conversation by a natural request; he opens the woman's heart by asking from her a favor; he passes by natural transition from the physical to the spiritual world, from nature to the truth which nature typifies; he presents to her, not ethical, but spiritual truth, not the simple moralities, but the deep things of the gospel; her badinage does not affront him, nor does he reprove her for it or indicate surprise, astonishment, or even objection; he answers by a direct and unanswerable appeal to her conscience, by convicting her of sin; in this, while his rebuke is sharp, his language is courteous, the language of commendation clothing condemnation; having once awakened her conscience he does not pursue the rebuke; leaving conscience to do its work, he suffers her to change the subject; he answers her theological question, not by direct response, but by asserting a principle of worship which lifts the soul above all the controversies respecting forms and methods of worship; finally he makes his first and fullest disclosure of his Messiahship to this Samaritan woman, showing himself most a Savior to her who most needs his salvation. His example thus illustrates the enthusiasm, the skill, the patience, and the spirituality needed for the most efficient, direct, personal work of soul-saving."

By this little incident in daily life, a human heart is reached by divine truth and a human life changed. In this process comes a revelation of the highest truths which shall be for all ages. With the new zeal begotten by her new spiritual life, she goes forth as a missionary to her friends and neighbors, and leads them to the great healer, who has blessing for Jew and Samaritan, bond and free. Many believed on him, in part because of her statement, and in part because of the life-giving power of the truth he taught. The man who had been rejected by the proud, haughty doctors of divinity in Jerusalem, found willing hearts in these despised people

about Shechem. A nucleus has been formed here, and from its very nature it must spread from heart to heart. Years later, when Stephen was martyred and persecutions arose, the disciples were scattered, and wherever they went they preached the word. Philip went into Samaria and "preached Christ unto them. And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed with them: and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed. And there was great joy in that city." May not the way have been prepared for this wonderful revival under Philip by the missionary work which was done near Shechem by the woman of Samaria?

"She left her pitcher at the well and to her home returned,
The welcome words of life to bear, that in her full heart burned;
Her kindred and the stranger's ear alike the news receive,
Of water from a hidden spring the Saviour waits to give.
With joyful haste and zealous love she turns to seek her home;
The ceaseless burden of her theme: 'Behold, the Christ is come!
He waits—Messiah waits to bless, as none e'er blessed before;
Come, drink ye of the living stream, believe and thirst no more;
Come and behold Messiah's face of whom the people tell;
Oh, come and hear his holy voice, he waiteth by the well.'
Oh, come to Christ! Samaria's hills echo his name aloud,
And tidings of Messiah fly amid the wondering crowd.
Like her of Sychar, hast thou drank of that blest fount? Then go,
Let others learn the priceless gifts that from the waters flow.
Go forth; and in thy Saviour's strength thy voice shall yet be heard,
And wandering hearts shall turn and bless a feeble woman's word."

Martha and Mary—
the Bethany Sisters

"One thing is known, and that one thing is of more value than all else besides concerning the home life of Christ at Bethany. The heart-felt affection with which the brother and the sisters looked upon Christ, was returned to the full by the Lord Jesus. It was this human affection which caused Bethany to be in an especial sense, 'the home' of Christ; which made it his quiet retreat during the troublous days which closed his earthly life; which led him to choose it as the last spot his feet should touch at the time of his ascension; and which, in the future, marks it as the first spot on which his foot shall stand when he comes again in his glory."

—*Bernard.*

"Oh, Master, when thou comest, it is always
A Sabbath in the house. I cannot work;
I must sit at thy feet, must see thee, hear thee!
I have a feeble, wayward, doubting heart,
Incapable of endurance, or great thoughts,
Striving for something that it cannot reach,
Baffled and disappointed, wounded, hungry,
And only when I hear thee am I happy,
And only when I see thee am I at peace.
Stronger than I, and wiser and far better
In every manner, is my sister, Martha.
You see how well she orders everything
To make thee welcome; how she comes and goes
Careful and cumbered ever with much serving,
While I but welcome thee with foolish words;
Whene'er thou speakest to me I am happy;
When thou art silent, I am satisfied;
Thy presence is enough, I ask no more.
Only to be with thee, only to see thee
Sufficeth me. My heart is then at rest.
I wonder I am worthy of so much."

—*Longfellow, in "The Divine Tragedy."*

Martha and Mary—the Bethany Sisters

IN November, 1881, with a little company of travelers, the writer came, late one day, to a small town east of Jerusalem, called by the natives, El Azariyah, after the name of Lazarus. Even before we reached the town, a score or more of Arab children crowded around us, clamoring for "baksheesh." It had a small population of fanatical Moslem people, who dwelt in some forty houses or huts. They have low stone walls and flat roofs, and present a rude appearance. In the midst of these unpleasant surroundings, he tried to picture to himself the little family that years before had dwelt there, and the kindly reception they gave to the Friend of sinners who journeyed through their town, and was hospitably entertained at their home.

The Bible tells us comparatively little about them, and tradition has been busy in supplying theories and false histories to supplement what the Scriptures have omitted. From this mass of conjecture we must accept what seems to us the more reasonable. The father was probably Simon, the leper, whose death or banishment from society, according to the civil law, placed his three children, Martha, Mary, and Lazarus, in possession of a comfortable estate. Simon was a Pharisee, and this is one reason, probably, why so many of this class visited these sisters and condoled with them at the time of their brother's death. These men were not all severe and bigoted in their judgments and inconsistent in their practice, as many of them seemed to have been. As they are photographed in the Scriptures, we have pleasant memories of Joseph and Nicodemus, and the Bethany family seemed to have been of this better class. In such a family it is almost certain these children would be trained up, as was Paul, to be strictly orthodox. When we consider the influence of such instruction upon one's early life and associations, and its tendency to make one narrow in his opinions and severe in his judgments, we are more and more surprised at the warm friendship which this family manifested toward Christ, and their con-

fession of faith in him. The testimony of Martha especially was not that of a common, uncultured, unfeeling peasant, but of a woman of good judgment, of plain, practical sense, and more or less familiar with the trend of thought of the religious men of her time. The family seems to have been one of wealth and of social distinction. This is indicated by the fact that they owned their own home, had their burial place in their own garden, and were able to give three hundred dollars worth of ointment as a costly token of honor to Jesus.

How this household first became acquainted with Jesus, we do not know. The first reference made to the family is in Luke a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received 10:38: "Now it came to pass, as they went, that he entered into him into her house." This is the first record we have of them, but they had evidently not only met before, but were intimately acquainted. At this very time the members of this family were all disciples of his. They were so near Jerusalem that they would hear much of what was transpiring there, and like Simeon and Anna they were of the more pious and devoted Jews, who were looking for the consolation of Israel. They may have become converts during his early Judean ministry, possibly because of some miraculous cures effected by him. The event mentioned here occurred some time during his itinerant ministry. It may have been as he was going toward Jerusalem, or as he was leaving the city. Bethany was easily reached. It was only three-quarters of an hour's distance from Jerusalem, but hidden from it by a spur of the Mount of Olives. At that time the houses, white-washed and flat-roofed, lay hidden among the surrounding heights amidst green fields and trees of many kinds. "In this sequestered spot, Jesus found a delightful retreat in the vine-covered cottage of Mary and Martha and Lazarus. Loving and beloved, it always afforded a peaceful retreat from the confusion and dangers of the temple courts, or the more exhausting circuits of his northern journeys. It was the one spot, so far as we know, that he could call *home* in these last months, but it was apparently the sweetest and the most like home he had ever had."

"Her home," would indicate that Martha was the head of the household, and therefore the elder sister. This is probably not the first time that her door has opened to welcome this delightful

Friend, before whom the door of any mansion might well spring open. No matter how humble our houses may be, we may be neglected by the rich and the great, but the divine Guest will come into our humble dwelling places if we desire him, and bring to our wearied spirits words of hope and cheer. It is more than likely that his disciples were also present with him, and so large a company would naturally make a good housekeeper a little anxious as to how she could best provide for them. We are told, "Martha was cumbered"—*distracted* would be a better term— as to how to entertain them in a manner commensurate with her love for her Lord. Without really intending it, her attention seems to have been drawn away from the Master, and was fixed upon the meal she was providing. To use one of our more modern phrases, she was "flying around" in her efforts to do well by her guests.

While Martha was manifesting this purturbed spirit, Mary, her sister, had for the time turned away from the kitchen with its mills, its cakes, its pottage, and had sought the place where the guests were at rest. In this room, either seated or reclining on divans, as was the Eastern custom, were Jesus and his disciples. Mary came and sat and "heard his word." We do not know the nature of that conversation. There was nothing incident to the comfort and welfare of human life in which he was not interested. Even the little cares and perplexities which to those in its ordinary circles make up the sum of human life, could not have been too small for the thought of one who tenderly sympathizes with all true living. Most likely at this special time his own direct work and mission lay close upon his heart. The conversation probably turned on the things that belonged to the kingdom of God. Mary, who was a disciple and interested in these things, listened to his words and became a student of his teachings. The opportunity to commune with the Master and to be instructed by him, had absorbed her heart and occupied her thought more than had the preparing of a special feast for him.

At this moment a discordant voice is heard in connection with this conversation. Martha comes to the room where the guests are gathered and says to the Master, "Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone?" "Hath left me" may mean that Mary had taken no part in the preparation at all, and was allowing Martha to do all the housework; or it may mean

that Mary had helped for a time, but had afterwards forsaken her. This might lead to the supposition that Mary had helped in the preparations that were necessary, but had declined to help in those not needed. Martha does not mean to say that Jesus did not care, for her very language implies that he did care and would agree with her as to Mary's duty. The sister's conduct seemed to Martha a kind of selfishness. She could not comprehend, under the present circumstances, her absorption in the truth or the teacher. Jesus, in response to her question, tells her that she is too much divided in mind between the claims of the spiritual and the earthly, and as the result she is unduly agitated. He does not rebuke her for her serving but for being careful and troubled about *much* serving; and he does not chide her until she asks him to chide her sister. Christ did not care for bodily indulgence. Simple food, a single dish, what was necessary for physical support, was all sufficient for him, because spiritual food is the one essential thing. Simple provision for the body is sufficient, and much serving is needless.

The character of Martha has often been misunderstood. She is not a worldly woman, whose soul is still immersed in the pots and pans of her own kitchen; not one whose bustle and energy in her own sphere, in keeping a model house, free from dust and dirt, have made her a source of unrest and annoyance to all the other members of the family. She was a true disciple of the Lord. Into her home Jesus came and loved to come, and loved all the members of the family. This home was to him like the shadow of a great rock. Wearied with his perpetual conflicts with the priests and Pharisees in the temple, he came here for peace and quiet and found ready listeners who drank in all he said. It was Martha who was mistress of the house and made it so pleasant a place for him. "What then was her fault? In her hospitable intent, she exaggerated the importance of the physical ministry to her guests. Her warm, loyal heart wished to show the utmost honor to Christ, but it was a mistake to suppose that Jesus was most honored by a sumptuous feast. He would have been better honored by sufficient food and attention, and for the rest by yielding the soul to be instructed by him in spiritual truths. The Savior is better pleased to give than to receive. He is the giver of every perfect gift. He came to give eternal life to men. The more we receive from him,

the more clearly do we follow along the line of his eternal purpose and grace to men."

"In studying this incident, we observe that both Martha and Mary were disciples of Christ. They represent, not the contrast between the followers of Christ and the followers of the world, but between different types of piety in the church. Martha's much serving was for the Lord. She desired to prepare a worthy entertainment, one worthy as an offering to him, and worthy as a manifestation of her own hospitality. Love and pride combined to prompt her activity. A social lesson lies on the surface of the incident. Much serving is not the best serving. The housekeeper is not always a homekeeper. Less supper and more heart, rather than less heart and more supper, give the best entertainment. The religious lesson is one preëminently needed in our era. Not he who asks most for Christ, but he who receives most from Christ, serves him best. To sit at his feet and learn, is always more acceptable than to be careful and troubled about much serving. Both types, the meditative and the active, are needed in the church, both are combined in the well-developed character. Christ did much serving, going about doing good, ministering to the body as well as to the soul; but he also sought opportunity for retirement, for solitude, and for communion with God."

The next news we have of these sisters is when death comes to desolate their home. No home is so happily located that this dread monster shall not enter it. The brother, the only brother, is taken suddenly sick and his life is threatened. There does not seem to be any probability of human relief. If the Master were only here he could help them, but he is absent, having been driven away by the hatred of the Jewish rulers. He had come to the feast of dedication. As it was in the winter, it was too unpleasant to teach and to preach on the open streets. So we find him talking to the people in Solomon's temple, on the east side. His Judean ministry up to this time had lasted about three months. It had been a ministry of continuous storm. "Twice during this period he had been mobbed; once an attempt had been made to arrest him; secret plans for his assassination were laid. At this time they endeavored to seize him and bring him before the authorities for trial, but he slipped away from them. In order to preserve his life, as his work was not yet done, he went away again beyond

Jordan into the place where John at first baptized, and there he abode, and many resorted unto him, and many believed on him there."

He is in the country of Perea, east of the Jordan, where these afflicted sisters send a messenger to him. It is in the rainy season, a distance of more than a score of miles away, over a rough road, where the man fell among thieves, down by the Jordan valley. Having reached this spot, he must cross the river and find the Christ wherever he may be. These sisters send a very tender message, saying to him, "He whom thou lovest is sick." This of course was their own brother, Lazarus, but they know Jesus would need no other designation than the one they had given him. There are no urgent, pressing words to come and help them in their extremity. There is no mention that their hearts are about ready to break at the possibilities which await them. They know that he well understood that no ordinary conditions of affairs would have led to such a message as this. The information is sent to him and he will know what is best to do. If best to come back again, in face of the dangers which threatened him when here, he will come. This one personal friend whom he has outside of the apostolic band, will not be neglected or forgotten. Does he come at once? No, but he sends unto these stricken sisters this apparently encouraging message, "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God." Time is now valuable and the messenger will hurry back with it to soothe these sorrowful sisters. He hastens down the hills to the fording of the river, crosses the Jordan, passes through the city of Jericho, and across its plain covered with palm trees, and up through the dangerous mountain passes along the road to Jerusalem. He reaches Bethany, and hurrying into their vine-covered home amid the olives, brings to the sisters the comforting words, "This sickness is not unto death." How surprised he must be, if not indeed amazed, when he finds that Lazarus is already dead; possibly was dead before he reached the Jordan on his outward journey. How strangely the words of the message must have sounded in the face of the event that had just occurred. Was the Master himself deceived, or was he a deceiver? How could he so have misunderstood the case? What must have been the thoughts of the sisters in the face of this message and the sad affliction which had befallen them?

CHRIST WITH MARY AND MARTHA

After having heard of this serious sickness of his friend through the messenger, Christ abode two days "in the same place" where he then was. Why did he do this? If "Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus," why not hasten to help them? It might have been that it was necessary to complete the work in which he was engaged, and from which he could not allow himself to be drawn away even by considerations of personal sympathy; or because the delay was necessary for the consummation of the miracle of the resurrection which no doubt he intended to work. But "God's delays are not denials." The officials want him, to condemn him, and the road is a dangerous one, but he will face the difficulties, and so he says to his disciples, "Let us go into Judea again." They remind him that the Jews had sought to stone him when there before. There is just now no immediate danger in his going, for when one is fulfilling the divine will he will be protected. Thomas was sure he saw not only danger but even death in the trip, and so he says, "Let us go that we may die with him." In the meantime the sisters, who had given up all hope of his coming at this time, bury their dead out of their sight. In their judgment there is really no need why he should come now. They do not expect him, yet he is coming. The disciples object to his going, but he will go and call back again that friend to life.

As he comes near the town he is met outside with the information that Lazarus had been buried four days. Two of these days possibly had been consumed by Christ in completing his ministry at the place where the messenger had met him with his sad message, and two more on his journey down to the ford across the Jordan, and to the town of Bethany. The family are in the midst of their mourning, and he will not press himself upon this home now filled with grief, where he shall find many of the Pharisees who have shown themselves to be his deadly enemies. In some way, information comes to Martha that Jesus is not far away, in fact, is just outside the town. "To Christ, the conventional mourning customs of Oriental society were exceedingly distasteful. He who put all the noisy mourners out of the room in which the daughter of Jairus lay dead, and who so gently rebuked the noisy and ostentatious lamentations of the women of Jerusalem at the time of his own crucifixion, might naturally be expected to decline to enter into the circle of formal mourners with the alter-

native either of violating the precedents and rules of good society, or of submitting himself in such an hour to the bondage which they imposed."

Martha, as soon as she hears of his presence, turns away from her old acquaintances and the Pharisees, and others who had come to comfort her after the manner of the times. She leaves the room, slips quietly out and away along the narrow streets, and passes out of the gate to find the place where the Master is waiting in the midst of his disciples. Precisely where this spot was, we do not know. Up the slope of Olivet, on a small plateau less than half a mile from Bethany, a stone lying by the way, about three feet in length, is found which to-day is called "the stone of rest," because tradition has it that here Christ was sitting and resting when Martha came to him. "Did you ever know a father who came home after a long absence, to be met at the gate by a loving wife who broke to him the awful message that their darling child had died during his long absence, and that she had been compelled to bury it alone? Did you ever stand beside a dear friend in the house of the dead while she met a brother who came home after many days' travel, only in time to look upon the pale, dead face of a brother who had passed the mystery and pain of death? What a meeting of brother's and sister's hearts as they stood in the chamber where their dead fellow lay humbled in death!" If you have, you know something of the sorrow and grief with which this sister met this one who had been to her more than a brother. With what silent looks of sympathy, with what dumbness of speech and sadness of heart, these disciples looked upon her stricken face! No doubt some of them had passed through similar experiences, for human nature is the same in all times.

The first audible wail of this sad heart is, "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." No doubt this was the all-prevailing thought in her heart. It seems to carry with it a little of reproach as well as lamentation. If the Master could only have reached them a little sooner! In times of trouble and bereavement we have all felt the force of Martha's "if," and we have again and again said to ourselves, If we had not done this, if we had not made that blunder, if our friend, or our physician, or some one else had made no mistake, our beloved would not have died. But maybe there is still some comfort for her. Had he been here, it

would have been well. Now that he is here he may help us to better bear our grief. Even now "whatsoever thou shalt ask of God, God will give it thee." Her heart went out to him with a vague, restless hope of some succor or consolation, she knew not what.

The Master says to her, "Thy brother shall rise again." This thought is not new to her and does not bring any present relief. There seems to be a little impatience implied in her answer, "Yes, I know that. He shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day." The Pharisees and other friends, no doubt, had been consoling her with that thought. Like the Jews of her time, she believed that the spirit of her brother had gone to the abode of the dead, and was there awaiting a day of judgment and of resurrection. But this was so far in the future it did not bring present comfort. Is there nothing for this hour that shall help me to bear this great loss? There then fell from his lips those words first spoken to Martha, but which have brought comfort to broken-hearted men and women during all these intervening centuries. They are read at almost every funeral; they are engraved on the rocks in almost every cemetery; they are enshrined in the very deepest recesses of human hearts: "I am the resurrection, and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me, shall never die. Believest thou this?"

There is still no promise of help for her. What meaning did these impressive words convey to her? It was a statement that "Jesus is the source of the resurrection and the fountain of life. Whoever, therefore, by faith in Christ has in him the hope of glory, never knows death; to him there is no Hades, no dark and dismal abode of the dead, no long and weary waiting for a final great jail delivery—a judgment and an acquittal. He passes at once from the lower to the higher state; he has already come to the general assembly and church of the firstborn. What we call death summons him simply to depart and be straightway with Christ. The eternal life which Christ here and now gives to those who are by faith united to him, is never suspended, so immortal and potent is this life principle which Christ offers to those who have received him, that if it were possible that one having died should receive it, he would by it be made to live again."

Martha expresses her faith in his Messiahship and in this she finds some relief. If at his word all the dead shall come to judgment in the nature of the case, the day of general resurrection cannot be very far distant, and it will not be long until she shall see her brother. During this time and up to this moment, she had been conversing with the Master without the presence of her sister. At his suggestion she calls Mary. The latter may not have known of the presence of Jesus as soon as Martha had known it. Martha, being the head of the household, would most likely hear of his arrival, while Mary, having no information on the subject, sat still in the desolation of her sorrow. Martha went secretly, perhaps desiring that she and her sister should have some conference with Christ without the presence of others. When Mary came where Jesus was, she threw herself at his feet, in the form of salutation ordinarily paid to a superior, and addressed him in the same sad words used by Martha not long before.

Jesus inquired where they had laid him, and they led the way to the sepulcher. Silent tears trickled down his cheeks, for, though the Son of God, he was no less the Son of man, and like ourselves was moved with the sight of human sorrow. He asks the bystanders, who had gathered by this time, to take away the stone which closed the entrance to the tomb. Martha, supposing he wants once more to look on the face of his dead friend, suggests that decomposition has probably already set in, for he has been buried four days. She finally withdrew her remonstrance, for the stone was rolled away. After prayer to God, "he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead came forth."

We have often wondered what Lazarus, the brother, heard and saw during those four days. When he once more reached his former home and sat down again with his sisters, his tongue may have been loosed and he may have related to them the incidents of his wonderful journey. After enjoying for so long a time the blessedness of the other world, did it not require a struggle to tear himself away and to come back again to the scenes of his early toil and suffering? Was there not at times a far-away look on his face, and did he not appear as if his thoughts were elsewhere? While it was a great gain and a great joy to his sisters to have him with them, was it not a great sacrifice for him? Did it seem to

him like the same old world he had left? Did he not long to go back, and was he not a stranger and a pilgrim here until the time came to depart?

It was six days before the passover which has been made memorable by its connection with the death of Jesus, when he came again to Bethany. He had most likely left Jericho on the morning of Friday, having spent the preceding night with Zaccheus. The day was well advanced when he reached the village of Bethany. Here he spent the next day, the Sabbath, the last one spent on this earth before his death. Its hours were spent in holy communion and the memory of it lingered long after with the inmates of that home, all of whom were his devoted friends. The Jewish Sabbath closed at sunset and after this, as a rule, came the principal meal of the day, which at times was prolonged even into the night. On this occasion "they made him a supper," showing that this special meal was in honor of their distinguished guest.

Who made the supper is not distinctly stated. It was in the house of Simon, the leper. Some supposed that he had been healed of his leprosy by our Lord, but still retained the name which indicated his former misfortune. Others think the supper was at Martha's house, that her father had been Simon the leper, and that the house still went by his name. The disciples were present and all the members of the Bethany household. We are told that "Martha served." As in the beginning, so now, her household skill is spent in honoring the Master. We hear nothing at this time of the burden of too severe a service. "The Master's rebuke, the chastening of her recent great affliction, the tempering influence of gratitude for the gift of a brother's life, all had separated the dross from her willing work and enabled her to wait upon her beloved Lord with a heart open to his words; and this was a sweeter service than ever she had wrought before. The querulous spirit that had marked our first acquaintance, does not here appear; there is no complaint that another had left *to her* the burden and heat of the day; no echo is heard upon her lips of the apostle's censure of Mary's waste. No, rather, hers, no doubt, would be the first and warmest commendation of an act that gave honor to One who was worthy of the costliest and the best."

The tables in those days were arranged in the form of a hollow square, open at one end, so the waiters would have easy access. Alongside of the tables, on three different sides, were couches on which the guests were stretched, reclining upon the pillows with the left side and using the right arm for taking food. With the body stretched backwards and the feet with or without sandals reaching out over the couch, it was easy for one to do what Mary did and which was not an unusual thing to do in the case of distinguished guests. The use of fragrant oils and ointments was very common among the ancients, who anointed themselves two or three times a day, in order that the delicious fragrance might not be dissipated. The wealthier classes carried their ointments or perfumes in small boxes of costly material and beautiful workmanship. Whether this ointment of spikenard was a part of the toilet arrangements of Mary, or a gift treasured up and kept for special occasions, we do not know, but evidently in her judgment there could not be a more fitting occasion than this. Her delicate taste would find pleasure in such costly perfumes. When she came to the banquet she brought this rich perfume with her. Its value in our money is estimated at *three hundred dollars.*

"Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment." It was a thought born of woman's graceful piety; an inspiration of that enthusiastic love which so often overleaps the ploddings of reasoning, the halting of prudence, the calculations of policy, the barriers of punctilio and the graspings of pelf, and sees the sweetest and noblest thing to do, and with the happiest manner does it, awakening the murmurs of the present but commanding the approval of the future and above all of the eternal Lord. The apostles murmured, led on by Judas with his hypocritical cant, about devoting the price of such costly things to the poor. But the Lord himself said, 'Let her alone; she hath done what she could.' "

This act on Mary's part was an act of worship. That which was in itself costly and beautiful to her womanly heart, she poured forth freely to honor him. Can anything be too good or too costly for those we love the most intensely? It was not an act done for the purpose of securing the applause of the multi-

tude; not even to gratify her own sense of beauty and enjoyment, but the natural and simple expression of her feelings toward the one she loved. "Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her," affirmed the Master himself. "It hath been so not only of Mary, but of every woman whose sweet piety has brought anointing to Jesus. The rudest men have seen, honored, and yielded before it. Upon the unbelieving woman, the world looks with vivid, wondering, and abhorrent eyes, or pays her the high compliment of unbelief of her sincerity. But the pious woman raises around her name, in every community and well nigh in every heart, a memorial of sincere respect and reverence. Yes, fair and more enduring than the tomb of Mausoleus or the Taj, or shaft or dome that mortal art shall ever rear, is that monument which love and piety raised for Mary of Bethany and shall raise for you, if you, too, break the precious nard upon the feet of Jesus."

We hear nothing further of Martha and Mary by name after this anointing. We must remember this was the last week of Christ's life, and that when out of the city he spent his nights in Bethany. It was not far away, and yet it was the distance between a battlefield and a home; from tumult and riot and murder, to love, rest and tender ministry. "It was worth while making that little change for one night, one quiet look upward, one brief and solemn pause in the rush of life, that the head might turn toward the stars and the firmament and the serenities of the upper places. The house at Bethany was not grand, but the home was lined with the gold of love. We want such a home when the stress is heavy upon us; tears could be shed there without being misunderstood, and the heart could tell its whole tale or remain in total silence, just as the mood determined, and there would be no misconstruction. It was a church in the rocks, it was a sweet sanctuary, just out of the great high road of life's business and sacrifice. He who can find a Bethany, a home, a rest-place, a Sabbath in the midst of the week, can bear his burdens with equanimity and grace and hope."

This was a week of no little anxiety to these sisters. When the cares and toils and struggles of the day were over, he would come from this surging city, where dwelt his bigoted and wicked

foes, who were the leaders in the Jewish church, and who should have been his friends, and spend the night under Martha's roof and in the seclusion and affection of her home. The tumults and trials of the day will be talked over, and in the presence of the tender affection and gentle sympathy which he found there, he would gather strength for the coming morrow. With what anxiety they would look for his return in the evening. Knowing the Pharisees as she did, and that they would stop at nothing, not even murder itself, to accomplish their purposes, Martha saw the Lord's peril and must have had some misgivings as to the final end. So day by day, with anxious, troubled heart, she ministered to his wants, and made her house a haven of rest and comfort, where his tired body and wearied spirit could find peace and quiet.

The end which she dreaded has come at last. His enemies are apparently successful, and her loved one is dead. He no more shall frequent her home and bring joy and gladness, as he had done afore time. Her hands shall no more find pleasure in ministering to his physical wants. The very kindness which had brought back her lost brother to her arms had hastened his death. This miracle had so intensified the opposition of his enemies that they sought not only his death, but the death of Lazarus himself, who was a living witness of his wonderful power. Their mourning is not yet over when one morning, over the hills and down the slope of Olivet, comes the cheering news, *"The Lord is risen."* Those sisters would be among the first to whom the astonished apostles would communicate the joyful information. May we not hope that during those days of tarrying before his final exit, he again visited that home in Bethany, dear to him by so many pleasant memories. It was in sight of that home where he stood one day to say farewell words to his disciples. "He led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them." When the cloud had finally received him out of their sight, these apostles returned to the city, and having sought an upper room, where they could commune with each other and with God, they "all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication *with the women* and Mary, the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren." May we not reasonably presume that Martha, if not indeed both of these Bethany sisters, was in that group of women who were united with others in praying for the descent of the Holy Spirit?

"It is wonderful how sharply and truly, in a narrative so brief, the characters of Martha and Mary are individualized. Martha, in her Judean dress and surroundings, is, after all, exactly such a good woman as is often seen in our modern life; a woman primarily endowed with the faculties necessary for getting on in the world, yet sincerely religious. She is energetic, business-like, matter-of-fact, strictly orthodox, and always ready for every emergency. She lives in the present life strongly and intensely, and her religion exhibits itself through regular forms and agencies. She believes in the future life orthodoxly, and is always prompt to confess its superior importance as a matter of doctrine, though prone to make material things the first in practice. Many such women there are in the high places of the Christian church, and much good they do. They manage fairs, they dress churches, they get up religious festivals, their names are on committees, they are known at celebrations. They rule their own homes with activity and diligence, and they are justly honored by all who know them. Now, nothing is more remarkable in the history of Jesus than the catholicity of his appreciations of character. He never found fault with natural organization, or expected all people to be of one pattern. He did not break with Thomas for being naturally a cautious doubter, or Peter for being a precipitate believer; and it is specially recorded in the history of this family that Jesus loved Martha. He understood her, he appreciated her worth, and he loved her.

"In Mary we see the type of those deeper and more sensitive natures, who ever aspire above and beyond the material and temporal to the eternal and divine; souls that are seeking and inquiring with a restlessness that no earthly thing can satisfy; who can find no peace until they find it in union with God."

The Bethany home, like all other homes, was in time dissolved, and the members of it are, no doubt, with their Lord in glory. The mistress of this earthly home threw open the door of her house and of her heart to admit this Guest, and long since heaven's gates were thrown open to admit her and her family. "In the future ages it may be our happiness to see and know those whose history has touched our hearts so deeply."

The Other Marys { Mary Magdalene
Mary—Wife of Clopas
Mary—Mother of Mark

"Women, attracted by his absolute goodness, lay their loving homage at his feet. Like the wife of Chuza, they ministered to him of their substance; like Martha, they opened to him the doors of their houses; like the woman in the Pharisee's dining-hall, they sought from his grace the pardon of his sins. They followed him, weeping, on the road to Golgotha; they stood beneath his cross; they were present at his burial; they were the first at the empty sepulcher; Mary of Magdala, forgetting her own lack of strength, would bear away his corpse; Mary of Bethany, unconscious of her love, brings precious ointment to anoint his body for the burial; while Mary of Nazareth, taught by the bitter sword which pierced her mother's heart, remembers as she sees him die."

—*Bernard.*

Mary Magdalene

ON the southeastern corner of the plain of Gennesaret stands a little village named Magdala, from which, most likely, Mary Magdalene takes her name. There were other Marys who were personal friends of Christ, and it was not unlikely that this one was named from the town in which she lived. It is located about half way between Capernaum in the north and Tiberias on the south. It is now known by the name of *Migdal*. When we were there, a few years since, the writer saw a goodly-sized stone structure, which, it was asserted, marked her grave. It is a rude building about twelve feet square, and may contain the remains of this woman. The town is of little importance and the inhabitants do not seem of much more value. We saw a dozen or more children, half of them naked, whose only thought was "baksheesh." About twenty rude huts complete the town.

After she was cured by Christ, we find her ministering to him of her "substance," as did other women, which would indicate that she was possessed of some property, and if so, must have had a comfortable home. So far as natural surroundings were concerned, her home must have been a pleasant one, especially when the country was settled, the vessels on the sea and the fishermen doing a thriving business. Then the cities along the coast were alive and prosperous. West of her were the high hills on which she may have climbed in her early days to look over the sea and the higher hills beyond it.

Her name has come down to us as a representative of that class of women who lead dissolute lives, and all over the world the institutions which Christian love has established for the welfare of these people, are termed Magdalene asylums. And yet this tradition, namely, that she was a lewd woman before her conversion, attaches to her name without a word or syllable in the New Testament to justify any such charge. The whole tenor of the Gospels is rather proof to the contrary. The best and earliest writings among the church fathers are against this tra-

dition. Clement, of Alexandria, and Tertullian say nothing of it when they speak of Christ's anointing. Irenaeus opposes it and so does Origen, and with him the succeeding expositors of the eastern church. Theophilus of Antioch, Macarius, Chrysostom, Theophylact, and among our more recent writers, Calvin, Grotiuos, Bengel, Alford Steir, Meyer, Olshausen, all reject this ancient tradition.

When this slander started on its unfortunate journey, we do not know. Two or three reasons may be suggested which will help to account for its origin. It is said that out of her were cast "seven devils." How natural in those days, and how prevalent the spirit still, to conclude that such a misfortune must be accompanied with some dreadful sin. The Jews were disposed to believe that the eighteen upon whom the tower of Siloam fell, must have been sinners above all men, else why should such a misfortune come upon them? So the inquiry goes about concerning the blind man, "Who did sin, this man or his parents?" and yet his misfortune was not the result of direct sin on the part of either. If a man be suddenly killed in some railroad accident, if parties be burned to death in a building, or if any other sudden misfortune come upon them, many persons are sure it is a judgment for some secret sin. How natural to conclude that there must have been something atrocious in this woman's life, or she would not have been so unfortunate.

Christ's treatment of these people was very considerate. The story mentioned in John 8 (which some manuscripts omit), tells us of the woman taken in adultery and brought to Christ for trial. There is also the story of the woman of Samaria who talked with him at the well, and the "woman who was a sinner," who anointed him at the Pharisee's house. These were forgiven and cleansed, and their names were probably purposely concealed. So far as we know, every one of these women, who sinned against womanly virtue, is nameless. This is not the way of the world to-day. Even our own sisters, as well as the male sex, are willing to fix the stigma of shame upon her, and often aim to call up her old life, even when she has honestly repented and is seeking to atone for it in every part. It is hardly likely that this treatment would have been changed in a case of this kind by announcing to the world the name of this one woman if she had led a bad life.

And more than this, the very Pharisees who were seeking in every way to hinder his work, and who blamed him for eating with publicans and sinners, would only have been too glad to have added to these other charges, the scandal of associating with a woman who had lived an impure life. They had said, "Behold, a man gluttonous and a wine-bibber," and they would have been glad to add to that, "Behold, a man the associate of harlots." In a sense, all sinners were alike to him, yet all his acts were distinguished by the most becoming propriety, and the fact that this woman, next to his own mother, was his constant and most devoted friend, is a strong proof that her early life was not in any way tainted by the things which are now alleged against her. This belief concerning Mary Magdalene may have in part originated from a very touching and pathetic story given us by Luke in chapter 7: 36-50. This story is somewhat similar to the one told of Mary of Bethany, in John 12: 1-8. By some, Mary of Bethany, the woman who was a sinner, and Mary Magdalene, have all been regarded as one and the same person, whereas they were, in all probability, three distinct persons, and the last two may have had no knowledge of each other. We give Luke's story.

"And one of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him. And he went into the Pharisee's house, and sat down to meat. And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, and she stood at his feet behind him, weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment. Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw it, he spake within himself saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him; for she is a sinner. And Jesus answering said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on. There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owned five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing wherewith to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me, therefore, which of them loved him most? Simon answered and said, I suppose that he to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged.

And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven. And they that sat at meat with him began to say within themselves, Who is this that forgiveth sins also? And he said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace."

Now, of the precise nature of her disease, we do not know. Some suppose it may have been chiefly physical in its origin, ending in epilepsy, or insanity, or both. If one has visited one of our modern insane asylums, and these are palaces in contrast with the rude hovel of an earlier day, he will see these people, no doubt, as Christ saw this woman, with glaring eyes, disheveled hair, sunken cheeks, injuring herself and others with whom she comes in contact. The mental machinery was unbalanced. There was no coherency in the thought, and the voice no doubt uttered indecent and blasphemous words. At times they are quiet and manageable, and at other times their natures are aroused and they seem to have the power of "ten furies." It is dreadful to thus see a human soul dethroned, the will a prisoner, and all this wonderful mental power at the mercy of a disordered physical system.

Or it may have been this and worse than this. Her disordered physical condition may have opened the way for a possession which was not uncommon in those times, and which was a thousandfold worse than insanity. That there was such a possession of human bodies by wicked spirits, seems to us beyond doubt. "We are led to the ordinary and literal interpretation of these passages that there are evil spirits, subjects of the evil one, who, in the days of the Lord himself and his apostles especially, was permitted by God to exercise a direct influence over the souls and bodies of certain men. The distinguishing feature of possession is the complete or incomplete loss of the sufferer's reason, or of

MARY MAGDALENE

the loss of will; his actions, his words, and almost his thoughts are mastered by the evil spirit, till his personality seems to be destroyed. . . It was but natural that the power of evil should show itself in more open and direct hostility than ever in the age of our Lord and his apostles when its time was short. It was natural also that it should take the special form of possession in an age of such unprecedented and brutal sensuality, as that which preceded his coming and continued till the leaven of Christianity was felt. Nor was it less natural that it should have died away gradually before the great direct, and still greater indirect, influences of Christ's kingdom."

In the country of the Gadarenes, immediately across the sea from where Mary Magdalene lived, we have an example of a man who was under the influence of a number of these spirits. "He had devils a long time and wore no clothes, neither abode in any house, but in the tombs; oftentimes he was kept bound with chains and in fetters, and he break the bands and was driven of the devil into the wilderness." When they were cast out by divine power, the man who thus had been led captive by them was found "sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind." This woman may have been in some such condition as this, and may have roamed at large in the fields or tenanted by turns the caves in the mountains back of her native home.

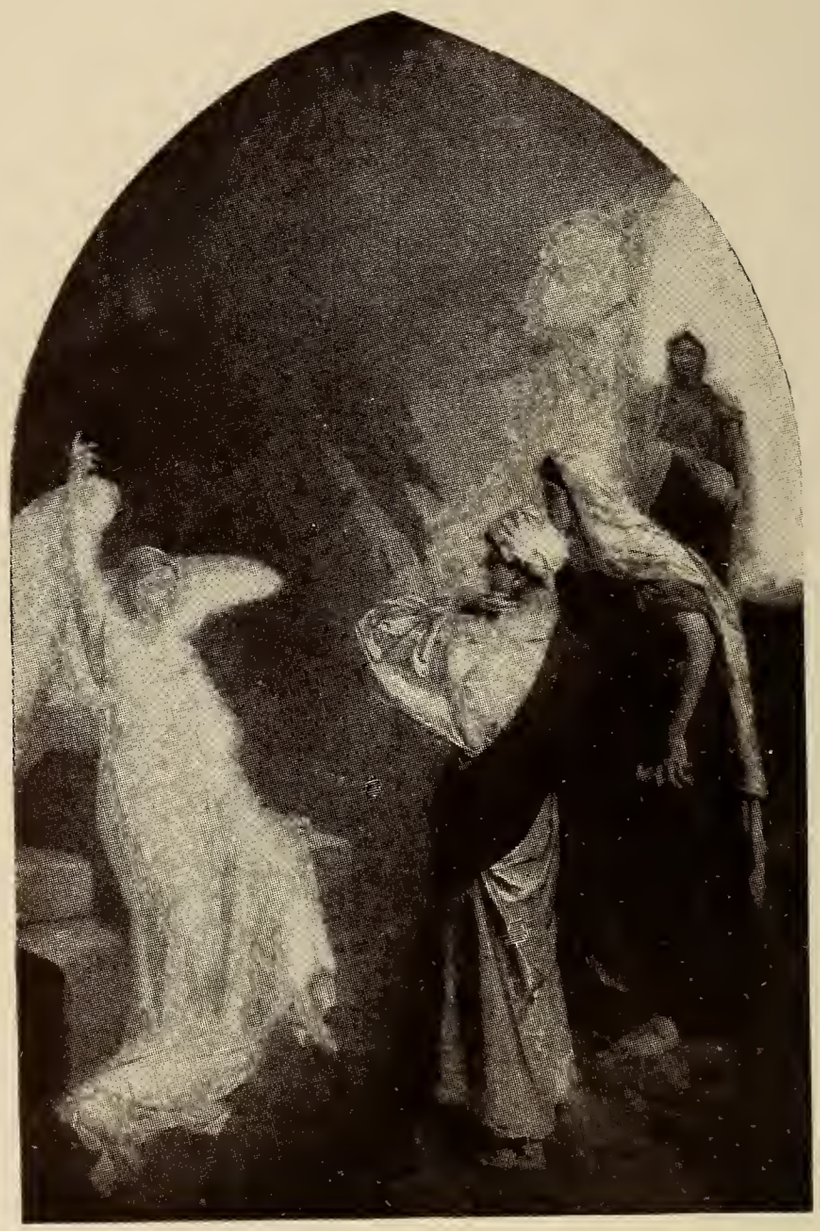
The time, place, and manner of her healing are not given us. The fact is simply stated by Luke (8:2) that she was one of those who, with others, went about with the Master, as he taught in the towns of the country, and ministered to him of her substance. He may have found her on one of his journeys, as he found blind Bartimæus at Jericho, and the maniac at Gadara; or she may have come down to the shore, as he taught from one of the fishing boats along the edge of the Sea of Galilee. Maybe some of her friends who knew of his wonderful power, had caught her and brought her, struggling and screaming, into his presence. "We can only picture to ourselves a woman with dishevelled hair and garments, with wild eyes, disfigured face, out of which all lineaments of the human were well nigh faded, and upon which sat the unhappy expression of a demented and demon-possessed, standing one day in that beautiful vale, face to face with the Son of man." In him was all power. Even the spirits

were subject to him; he commands them to depart, and they go. They must go when they hear that voice, though there were ten thousand of them.

What must have been the expression of her face when she was relieved of this dreadful burden which she had been carrying—when she first had a conscious knowledge of herself and her relations? Her first look must have been into that face, and her first thought must have been of her deliverer. When one turns away from a sinful life, experiences the conscious joy of pardoned guilt and a realization of divine acceptance, what a flood of delightful feelings rolls over the soul! Everything has become new; the world about seems to have taken on a new beauty; the stars shine with a clearer brightness; the birds sing with a richer melody than even their voices were capable of before. Some such joy, perhaps more intense, must this woman have experienced when there came a voice which relieved her of the demons that had possessed her.

That voice she will always want to hear, and that presence she will have no desire to leave. The first notice we have of her is in company with Joanna, the wife of Herod's steward, Susanna, and others of the devoted women of those times. Her relations to her own home no doubt have been resumed, while a new life of activity has been opened up to her. The least she can do as a compensation for what has been done for her, is to unite with others in furnishing from her own resources sufficient for him who is going about blessing men and women everywhere. She deserts the fields, the caverns, and the tombs where, no doubt, she was wont to dwell, devoid of reason and led captive by the devil and his will, for the companionship of devoted women. She is no longer helpless and dependent upon others, but she is one of the world's workers, with a new purpose in life, and both able and willing to relieve the wants of those about her.

Not only did Christ open up a new world to this woman, but by the influence of his truth he has made a new world for the sex. What Christianity has done for woman would be an intensely interesting chapter in the world's history. Take the record of almost any of the nations of the past, even the most cultured, before Christ's time, and the lot of woman was almost unbearable. She was, in many cases, a beast of burden, with no



THE ANGEL AT THE TOMB

mental powers, with no soul, hence without a future. She had no will of her own, no aim in life save the gratification of man's baser passions. Her own life and that of her children in many cases at the mercy of her lord; in others hardly as well off as others about her. When Christianity came, it gave mankind a new conception of society, and of the value of a human being. It lifted him from the dominion of his brutal powers and took woman away from his domination. It put her on a level with himself, his sister, bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh, under the dominion of moral law, and accountable to the same God for the use of the powers which have been given. While it is done very much for man, it has created a new world for woman. The very glory and dignity which is placed upon her sex is an additional reason why every woman in civilized lands should be an ardent supporter of the truth which Christ came to exemplify. No woman who has ever compared the condition of her sex in heathen lands with what it is in Christian countries, will have any desire to return to the former condition.

She, with other women, followed Him on his last journey to Jerusalem and ministered to him. It is very probable that she was present with others at his mock trial, where she saw one dearer to her than her own life ill-treated by Caiaphas, by Herod, and by Pilate, who knew he was innocent. She heard these high priests and whitened Pharisees urge on that howling mob clamoring for the Son of man. She stood on Calvary's mount, saw him nailed to the cross, and that dropped into the ground. She, with others, stood and looked while the Roman soldier thrust the spear into his side to see if he were yet dead. The temple had been rent, the sun had veiled his face, dead men had left their graves and come forth, but she did not desert her Master and her friend. While his enemies are putting him to death, he shall know he is still dying, as every man wants to die, in the presence of his dearest friends.

No doubt those women are anxious that the Master's body shall have respectful burial, but where shall it be placed, and how shall it be done? Their faithful, persistent watching would seem to show such anxiety. While patiently waiting, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, who are known as secret disciples, appear. If they fail to properly honor him in life, they will at least see

that he has an honorable burial. These men come with authority to take charge of the body. Rubens represents the women as helping to take the body from the cross. Servants have also come with Joseph, bearing the spices and gums which are used for the preservation of the body. It was not properly an embalming, for there was not time for that, because of the near approach of the Sabbath. "In his own new tomb which he had hewn out in the rock," they laid Jesus. The remains were borne in the arms of the rich men with their servants, followed by at least two women disciples, Mary Clopas and Mary Magdalene. The stone was rolled against the door of the tomb, but the two women did not hasten away. For some time after they were found "sitting over against the sepulchre," loath to leave the spot made sacred by his presence. The shadows of evening fall and they hasten into the city to buy, before the Sabbath shall come, the spices that will be needed to complete the honor which they propose to pay the body of the Lord.

Just how and where they spent that Passover Sabbath, has not been revealed to us, but we feel sure those bereft followers were near enough together to readily communicate with each other. "When the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him." She who was last at the cross, is one of the earliest at the grave, and the first witness of the resurrection. This is a very important event in the up-building of the Christian system, and very great honor was put upon this woman. When she arrived she found the stone rolled away and the tomb empty. It seems that Mary fled to where Peter and the others were gathered, and said, "They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him." After a time she returns to the garden, and stands by the empty sepulcher, weeping. There is no place dearer to her than this spot, and if she tarries here she may in some manner learn what has become of his body. By some accident, perhaps, she looks into the vault, and to her surprise, sees two "angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet where the body of Jesus had lain."

These angels, in tones of sympathy and comfort say to her, "Why weepest thou?" She is so occupied with her loss that she

may not be conscious that they are angels. It is a comfort to know where your dead friends are sleeping, but she had no such pleasure as this. She answers, "They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him." She hears footsteps, and as she turns about she hopes to learn something of his absent body. Jesus himself stood beside her, but she did not recognize him. "Did her tears blur her vision? Was the body of her Lord so changed by the passion, the cross, and the sepulcher? Were her eyes holden as in the case of the disciples on the way to Emmaus? Perhaps, more naturally, we may suppose that in the intensity of her one absorbing emotion, she but glanced upon the stranger's face, and uttered her hurried question with little more than the outline of his form impressed upon her mind. The sudden transition from the dim light of the vault, into which she had been looking, to the full light of the morning that fell in her eyes as she turned, would certainly contribute to, if it might not wholly account, for her failure to recognize Jesus. This natural effect would be intensified by that weakness of the organs of sight which always results from excessive weeping."

It was natural to conclude that no one but the gardener would be about so early in the morning, and he no doubt for some good reason may have removed the body. In the agony of a bleeding heart she beseeches him, "If thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away." That body may not mean much to him, but it represents everything to her. As she speaks, she hears the word "Mary." It must have come to her in the familiar and well-known tones of earlier years. A glance at that face and the recognition is complete. Her once sad but now joyful heart says, "Rabboni—my Master." In transports of joy she no doubt threw herself at his feet, intending to embrace him, as her companions had done but a little time before, but he forbade her. Why was this?

"May we not, at the outset, suppose that there was a tender and wise regard for Mary's physical welfare? The terrible malady from which she had been healed was the evidence of a naturally excitable temperament, a condition of nerves highly susceptible to agitations. Her cure, thorough as it was, we may be permitted to think still left her peculiarly open to the disturbing influence of unusual excitements. We can therefore understand why the

Master should have laid a check upon her passionate devotion by his 'Touch me not.' How he should have recalled her to her right mind, tempered her excitement by forbidding her the act which might feed it, and turned her thoughts quickly into a channel of healthy activity by sending her instantly forth with the message, 'Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend to my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.' "

She hastens to tell the disciples "that she had seen the Lord." A woman becomes the first preacher of the resurrection. This was the important duty of that hour and the highest service she could render. Wherever this gospel has gone, even down to the present, she has been preaching the same truth. In Christian or heathen lands, wherever a church has been organized, her sisters have been and are to-day proclaiming the same glorious truth of a risen Lord, and so it shall be to the end of time. The message is one of salvation to a lost and ruined world. Every Christian Sabbath is a monument to the fact which she proclaimed to these disheartened disciples. There is little wisdom in inquiring, "Shall women preach?" when the Head of the church himself sent a woman out to preach the resurrection before the sluggish male disciples had yet had apprehension of the fact.

"In this gracious service, Mary of Magdala drops away from the sacred record. Our last view of her shows her in the midst of the disciples, as they mourned and wept, answering to the incredulous company the fact of the Lord's Easter. It is a happy closing of her life's history. She comes before us, burdened with that calamity which despoiled all that is sweetest in life, and which fell from her forever at the voice of the Son of God. She passes from us in the midst of mourning and weeping men, bearing to them the news of that sublime fact—the resurrection of the Christ—which has transformed sorrowing and sin-burdened mortals into children of God, joyful with the hope of a heavenly immortality."

Mary---Wife of Clopas

"Though we admire the beautiful Rachel, or the heroic Deborah, or the virtuous Abigail, or the affectionate Ruth, or the fortunate Esther, or the brave Judith, or the generous Shunammite, we do not find in the Rachels and Esthers the hallowed ministrations of the Marys, the Marthas, and the Phœbes, until Christianity had developed the virtues of the heart and kindled the loftier sentiments of the soul. Then woman became not merely the gentle nurse, and the prudent housewife, and the disinterested lover, but a friend, an angel of consolation, the equal of man in character, and his superior in the virtues of the heart and soul. It was not till then that she was seen to have those qualities which extort veneration and call out the deepest sympathy wherever life is divested of its demoralizing egotisms. The original beatitudes of the Garden of Eden returned and man awoke from the deep sleep of four thousand years to discover, with Adam, that woman was a partner for whom he should resign all other attachments of life; and she became his star of worship and his guardian angel amid the entanglements of sin and cares of toil." —*Dr. John Lord.*

Mary—Wife of Clopas

WE know little of this Mary except as she comes into view during the last week of Christ's life. She is supposed to be a sister of Mary, the mother of Jesus. It is probable there was a distinction between the original names, that of our Lord's mother being *Miriam* and of this one *Maria;* such a difference as would appear in "Miriam" and "Mary" with us. She was the "mother of James the less and Joses" (Matthew 27:56), and had two other sons, Simon and Jude, and also some daughters who dwelt at Nazareth. It has been supposed that Mary Clopas was the eldest of her family and that her children were older than our Lord. They are spoken of as "brothers" of our Lord, hence in their native town of Nazareth they must have been looked upon substantially as one family.

When Christ began his ministry she was probably somewhat advanced in years, and her age and experience had no doubt matured her judgment. She seems to have been an earnest believer in the Messianic character of our Lord. Two of her sons, James the less, afterwards called "the Just," and Jude, were numbered in that little band of the apostles. So to be with them as well as to aid in the prosecution of their work, she, with other women, followed Christ in his preaching tours and helped to supply his physical wants. While that is true, some of her sons who are somewhere called the Lord's "brethren," did not accept him. It was then, as it is now, and no doubt will be to the end of time. Even in the same family some will hear and obey, while others will hear and reject. It is to be hoped that these saw the error of their ways, when the Master ascended and finally became prepared for the home above. We may be sure this faithful woman not only ministered to the wants of this rabbi as best she could, but that by example and by precept she would seek to lead these opposing children out of the rigid and austere forms of Phariseeism, into the light and liberty of the new gospel.

This woman comes more vividly before us in the last week of Christ's life. It is Friday morning, a busy day in Jerusalem, and a very important day in the history of the world's salvation. It is passover time and the streets of Jerusalem are thronged with people from all parts of the land. The rabbi, who has been preaching a new gospel, who claims to be the long-looked-for Messiah, has been condemned to death by a false trial, which has been the shame of the ages. The Roman governor, who pronounces him an innocent man, and who should have used his police to protect him, in violation of all Roman justice, turns him over to the tender mercies of a cruel mob. They start toward the place of death, with the victims carrying their own crosses, as was the custom of these Roman times. In that crowd of people who pushed along these narrow streets, spreading over space, laughing and jeering as though on some merry-making tour, was John, the beloved disciple, and some Christian women. These were there to show their sympathy with and their devotion to this Master, and they pressed as closely to him as the Roman officials would allow. John, who was present with them, tells us in his own account of the affair, "Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene." From other sources we learn that Salome was also there. They intended to be faithful to the end.

Mary, with others, saw the whole proceedings in connection with that dreadful tragedy, at the commission of which the temple rocked, the graves opened, and the sun refused to shine. Her eyes were sore with weeping as she gazed upon the bloody scene, and her agonizing heart was about broken with anguish. She saw the wearied Christ faint beneath his load; the man of Cyrene carried it and threw it down at the appointed place. The person who was to end his life thereon, stood patiently by. The strange sign was there with its mixed languages, which would tell the passerby that "This is the King of the Jews." She saw the spikes driven into his quivering hands and feet, the cross is lifted and dropped into the socket, where it shall stand until life has ebbed away. When the officials have completed this, they will wait and nature will do the rest.

She, with these other women, stand at first by the cross, but later on they seem to have been pushed back. They may have gone of their own accord, because of the intensity of their grief; or it may have been necessary that the spectators should be farther removed, in order to keep in check this insolent mob, but they could still see it all. "The cruel mocking of the chief priests, scribes, and elders, the deriding of the rulers; the railing, the reviling. the wagging of the heads by the people; the mockery of the soldiers; the railing of the impenitent thief; the tender plea of the penitent one; the commission which consigned her sister to the care of John, and gave her thus a surer home than her own advancing years could promise—all these Mary must have heard and seen."

That must have been a dreadful day. It is yet only midday, and yet the heavens are darkened. How slowly to her, as well as to that innocent sufferer, do the hours roll away. It is time for the evening sacrifice, and the lamb has been slain. No need of any more temple or Jewish sacrifice. The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, hangs now on the accursed tree. These faithful friends have stood by him to the end. They may have cheered him as best they could by their social converse, but if so, the Holy Spirit has recorded none of their words. But the falling tears, the suppressed sob, the interested face, their very presence on such an occasion, with such disagreeable surroundings reveal to him and to the world that he was not without friends. He did not die alone or unattended. They did all that they could do; they encouraged him by their presence and watched with him until his life went out.

Whittier, in his poem entitled "The Angels of Buena Vista," shows how we long for woman's tenderness and sympathy when we come to the end of life. The Mexican wife, Ximenia, goes from her dead husband's side out among the wounded and dying on the battlefield.

"Close beside her, faintly moaning, fair and young, a soldier lay,
Torn with shot and pierced with lances, bleeding slow his life away;
But, as tenderly before him the lorn Ximenia knelt,
She saw the Northern eagle shining on his pistol belt;
With a stifled cry of horror straight she turned her head,
With a sad and bitter feeling looked she back upon her dead.
But she heard the youth's low moaning, and his struggling breath of pain,
And she raised the cooling water to his parchèd lips again.

"Whispered low the dying soldier—pressed her hand and faintly smiled.
Was that pitying face his mother's? Did she watch beside her child?
All his stranger words with meaning the woman's heart supplied;
With her kiss upon his forehead, 'Mother,' murmured he, and died.
'A bitter curse upon them, poor boy, who led thee forth,
From some gentle, sad-eyed mother, weeping lonely in the North;'
Spake the mournful Mexican woman, as she laid him with her dead,
And turned to sooth the living, and bind the wounds which bled."

The end has come, at least the apparent end of the Reformer's work. If the painter is correct in his interpretation, she, with other women, helped to lower the body of Jesus so it could be prepared for burial. Two male disciples came with authority, and he is placed in Joseph's tomb. They could only partially embalm him, for the time was short before the Sabbath would begin. The tomb in which he had been placed had never been occupied by any other. No doubt a great burden was lifted from their hearts, to find that Joseph had a place for the body. In their minds his was only a temporary resting place, but it fulfilled a prophecy concerning the Messiah, that he should be "with the rich in his death." The stone was rolled to the entrance and this Mary and Mary of Magdala sat there against the sepulcher until the shades of the coming night admonished them to hasten home. It had been a heart-breaking day for them, and no doubt tired and weary in body and mind, their thoughts confused and their expectations frustrated, like two sisters they sat and consoled each other while into each other's ears they breathed out the disappointments of their heart.

On their way back into the city they procured spices and ointments with which, after the Sabbath had passed, they intended to complete the embalming of that dear body, and keep it from corruption as long as possible. Darkness came down upon the city. The Jews had killed their Messiah. He sleeps quietly in the new tomb prepared for another. Little did the people know the meaning of that fearful imprecation, "His blood be on us and our children." How little do any of us know the consequences of a single sin. How thoroughly the chief priests and scribes had led away the people. It will be only a few short years until that curse will bring its punishment; that proud city shall be leveled with the dust; that magnificent temple shall be destroyed, and

that far-famed nation be scattered to the four winds, a hissing and a by-word among the nations of the earth.

That little band of disheartened, disappointed men and women must have been near to and consoled each other on that Sabbath day. They talked over their hopes and fears, their expectations and their sad disappointment. They did not dream of such an ending. They were sure he was the man who should redeem Israel, but the rulers have put him to death as a malefactor. How often rulers have repeated that act since that time, released Barabbas, and crucified the Christ! We did that in these United States when we held the poor black man in cruel bondage, that he might add to the wealth of those who owned him. We are doing it in this same land to-day where bribery, oppression, monopoly, and misrule are allowed to have sway, while the cause of the poor, the unfortunate, the neglected, and the lowly is trampled in the dust.

These women must have slept, for their bodies had been wearied with the watchings of the day, but love counts no labors severe, no burdens heavy, which are carried in the interest of those we hold dear. They had prepared to go and complete their embalming. Mary Magdalene came "early while it was yet dark." Mary Clopas and those with her, "at the rising of the sun." These periods were very near to each other. The hour shows the anxiety of the women to be there promptly, and complete their work. The gates are open probably by an earthquake, and they pass out. The men are not with them, and they wonder how they shall be able to roll away the stone. Until that is done, they cannot enter the chamber cut in the rock, where the body of their Lord is resting. As they reach the sepulcher, the sun comes up over the eastern hills, and hill and valley are soon ablaze with his glory.

When they reached the hallowed spot, strange to say, the stone is already rolled away. How often have we had the same joyful experience when we have gone forward in the path of duty; doors have opened to us, difficulties have vanished, and the lions have disappeared from the way. When Mary Magdalene first saw the opening, in the impetuosity of her nature, she ran to tell Peter and the other disciples that the Lord's body had disappeared, with the hope, perhaps, that they could help bring it

back. Mary Clopas and Salome seem to have entered farther in, so they could see the interior and they beheld a young man and were "affrighted." Perhaps any of us, at least most of us, would have been so under the same circumstances, and yet why should the appearance of angelic visitors make us afraid? Is there in this a confession of our own sinfulness, and a dread that their coming means punishment? The young man whom they saw, said to them, "Be not affrighted: Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: he is risen; he is not here: behold the place where they laid him. But go your way, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you."

They did not hesitate, but went at once. Matthew tells us, "They departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy, and did run to bring his disciples word." The fear was the result of what they had just seen; the joy, of the blissful message which was given them. The commingled feelings which they expressed are not new in human experience. How their busy minds must have been thrilled with the hope that their Master was again alive, and that they might see him once more; with the reception which his disheartened disciples would give the message which they carried, and with the uncertainty how all this would affect their own nation, which had cruelly put him to death. The feeling of "joy" seems to predominate, for this is the story which their hearts wanted to believe. Mark tells us, "They trembled and were amazed." They were in a kind of joyful ecstasy. So intent were they on their own thoughts and their present mission, that they neither conversed with each other nor delayed to speak to any one whom they met. They may have thought it was not yet safe to say anything lest they might endanger their interests with the public officials. While these devoted women were thus hastening to announce the gospel of the resurrection to the disciples, the soldiers were on their way to report to the Pharisees the infamous falsehood which they had concocted to tell (Matthew 28:11). The one was about to publish their story for the world's redemption; the other to conceal and counteract it. Satan is as quick to silence the gospel as the disciples are to proclaim it.

THE THREE MARYS

Those who "run" in the path of duty, shall happen upon rich rewards. As they were hurrying forward with their joyful message, a well-known form stands before them. It was the risen Lord. The angel had been sent to the tomb to make an announcement to them, and now the Master himself comes to greet them. The great honor is thus bestowed upon them of being *the first to see the risen Lord*. He addressed them in the common form of salutation, "All hail," *joy to you all*. It was joy to them at this crucial period, and has been a joy to all womankind ever since. How much they needed such a message of inspiration after the sorrows they had passed through. God always reveals himself to those who look for him and love him. He has appeared to women everywhere in all ages where his gospel has been preached, and said to them, "Joy to you all." His gospel has brought a benediction to the sex and wherever his teachings have prevailed, woman has seen a light and life and joy and inspiration which she has found nowhere else. "They came and held him by his feet and worshipped him." They had started with mixed feelings of fear and joy, but his presence drives away their fear and increases their joy. "Go, tell my brethren." What precious words to those poor, sorrow-stricken disciples who have been crushed in heart and life by his sad death! And so are we all his "brethren" to-day, who follow in his footsteps, who keep his commandments and who look for his coming.

It was women who first bore the glad tidings of the resurrection, and women's feet are still running the world over and carrying everywhere the same glad news. "All expositors have noticed the extraordinary honor conferred upon woman throughout all these scenes. To her came the first announcement of the resurrection; to her the first sight of the risen Lord; she it was whom the angels sent to herald this fact to the apostles themselves; to her came the Savior's commissions that summoned the disciples to that tryst among the hills of Galilee, where the sight of his glorified presence could be vouchsafed to them. Who so well fitted to carry the joyful news to those upon whom the horror of a great darkness had fallen, as the very persons who, with their own eyes, had seen the Lord, and who had been made to rejoice by his presence? And who so fitted to carry the same glad tidings to a ruined world to-day as those for whom he has

done so much? We still find women foremost in all religious work. Wherever men and women are in sorrow and distress; wherever afflictions have come with a heavy hand, and poverty and wretchedness have shown their wan faces; in the cell of the criminal, or in the abode of the strange woman; in the home of want, on the bleak frontier, or in the dense city, at home or abroad, in pulpit or in pew, in the prayer-meeting or in the Sunday school, where men and women need to be told of a Christ who came to save men, there do we find the Marys of to-day, a fitting example of those who were Christ's friends when here on earth; strong in faith, hope, and courage, willing to do or to suffer, that a knowledge of the teachings of the Lord may be spread abroad and men be made to rejoice in hope of everlasting life.

Mary---the Mother of Mark

"Not long since, in a great city, an aged Christian woman closed her earthly life. She had lived always in very plain circumstances. She had enjoyed only the most ordinary privileges of education. She had no peculiar gift for or distinct form of Christian activity. She had not taught a Sunday-school class, nor led a woman's prayer meeting or taken any part in a missionary society, nor been connected with a temperance union or any other sort of organized association. She had never been recognized by her friends as an active worker in any capacity. But for sixty of her eighty years she had been a true, earnest, and sincere Christian. She had been a faithful wife, and a loving, self-denying mother. She had brought up her family in the fear of the Lord. She had lived a quiet, patient, gentle life. Her life story was a record, not of any great deeds, nor of any fine things done, but of eighty years of plain, simple, lowly, Christ-like goodness. Yet it never can be known till the judgment day when the books shall be opened, what blessings that humble life brought to the race of man. Its silent, unconscious influence poured out through all the long years into other lives, making them better, happier, holier, sweeter."

—Dr. J. R. Miller.

Mary—the Mother of Mark

PAUL, in his letter to the church at Colosse, commends to their kind notice, "Marcus, sister's son to Barnabas," from which tender memory we learn that this Mary was the sister of Barnabas. He was born on the island Cyprus, and while we have no expressed statement concerning the sister, it is not improbable that she also was born there.

Cyprus is about one hundred and fifty miles in length, and from five to fifty in breadth. The interior is mountainous, a ridge being drawn across its entire length. It was long the boast of this people that they could build and complete their vessels without any aid from foreign countries. Among the mineral products were diamonds, emeralds, and other precious stones, alum and asbestos; besides these were lead, iron, zinc, with a portion of silver, and above all, copper. It was famed among the ancients for its beauty and fertility, and all modern travelers agree that in the hands of an industrious race, it would be one of the most productive countries in the world. Imperfectly as it is cultivated, it still abounds in every production of nature, and bears great quantities of corn, figs, olives, oranges, lemons, dates, and indeed every fruit seen in these climates. It nourishes great numbers of goats, sheep, pigs, and oxen, of the latter of which it has at times exported supplies to Malta. The most valuable product at present is cotton. The writer had a view of the island in 1881, while the vessel on which he was riding tarried for a time at Limasol, to unload some passengers, goods, and cattle.

Salamis was the capital, and it was from this point that Paul entered on his missionary journey. Jews were located here before the time of Alexandria, and they became quite numerous on the island. They may have been drawn hither in part by the copper mines which were at one time farmed out to Herod the Great. The early persecutions may have driven the Jews who were Christians into this place, and they thus became a very important help in the growth of the church. Salamis, at present, is mostly covered with the sand drifted in from the beach by the ocean waves. We are told that Barnabas was a Levite, hence his father must

have belonged to the priestly class. We do not know the father's name, but if true to the teachings and practices of his people, his children were faithfully trained in a knowledge of the Jewish law. In the case of Barnabas this proved very effective, "for he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith.' It was the duty of the priestly class to keep before the minds of the people the coming of Him who was to save the nation. The whole Jewish ritual pointed to this. Every time these officials looked upon a smoking altar they were reminded of the coming Messiah. The forty-eight cities into which the Levites were distributed, became so many university centers, where they studied the law together, and from thence were sent out into several sections to teach the people. The careful instructing of his own family was the duty of every good Jew, and especially of a Levite. "And these words which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, . . . and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes, and thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates." There is hardly any doubt but that Mary was trained in the faith and hope of the Jewish people.

Among these Levites, at one time were about four thousand musicians, whose work it was to furnish music for the temple service. They were divided into twenty-four choirs, each headed by a chief. (I. Chronicles 25.) In order that these might be able to take their part in the great choral hymns of the temple, special study and preparation would be necessary. We are told in the *Mishna* that, "As for those who are singers, they were summoned by the blast of the trumpet from all parts of the spacious temple. They sung psalms, accompanied by their musical instruments, while the priests were pouring on the altar the libation of wine." The word *Nabi,* which we usually translate "prophet," came to have a fourfold meaning because of the various offices which they performed. They were to be "teachers," "public orators," "poets," and "composers of music," and a course of study in these schools was arranged accordingly. Among the men trained in the schools of prophets were Levites.

"In the days of David we read of Heman, Asaph, and Jeduthun as chief among the chiefs of musicians, numbering two

hundred and eighty-eight, in twenty-four sections of twelve each, and under them four thousand to praise Jehovah with instruments. What grand choruses there must have been when with sackbut, psaltery, harp, and all manner of brazen instruments, the army of Levites moved along the streets of Jerusalem, shaking the very walls with their melody and the voice of their inspired hymnal. It was with such a scene in mind that St. John in Patmos could enter into the spirit of that vision of the worship of the great company before the throne, harping with their harps and sending up to God the song of Moses and the Lamb like the voice of many waters."

When we do hear of the Levites in the New Testament it is chiefly as a type of a heathen, formal worship. But if "a great company of priests were obedient to the faith," may not their influence have led many of the Levites who were associated with them to follow their example? The conversion of Barnabas and Mark were not the only instances of men who received the new faith, as it really was, for a fulfillment of the old. And so far as the chants and songs which they learned in connection with the temple near by could be adapted to the services of the synagogue, would they not also transfer these to other Christian gatherings and make them a part of their religious services and worship? May not Mary, who was accustomed to hear these instruments played and these songs chanted, have herself become skillful in instrumental music and song?" When she, with her brother, entered into a new faith and received Jesus as indeed the Messiah for whom they had long been looking, may not she have carried into her own home these accomplishments learned in her father's home, and thus made that home a place of social gathering and religious worship for these scattered disciples?

Pliny, in his letter to Trajan, the emperor, A. D. 111, says he interrogated the Christians who had been arrested, as to their actions, "but they affirmed that this was the sum of their fault and error, that they were accustomed on a stated day, to meet together before day *to sing a hymn to Christ in concert* as to a God, and to bind themselves by a solemn oath not to commit any wickedness." Very early we see indications of the simple forms of worship in the synagogues having been carried over into the Christian church. In addition to reading from the Old Testa-

ment and listening to remarks from any who wanted to speak, a letter was often read from one of the apostles. There were prayers which soon followed prescribed forms, with repetitions of the Lord's prayer and the singing of Psalms. Paul and Silas, it is recorded, sang praises unto God in the jail at Philippi. In the Epistles we have reference made to the use of "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs." It is thought that in addition to the Psalms, Christian hymns began to appear in worship as early as the time of St. Paul; that fragments of these hymns have been found in his Epistles, as for example,

"Awake, thou that sleepest,
Arise from the dead,
And Christ shall give thee light."

"He who was manifested in the flesh,
Justified in the spirit,
Seen of angels,
Preached among the nations,
Believed on in the world,
Received up into glory."

May not some of these psalms and hymns have been heard in Mary's house, at Jerusalem, and may she not have partly helped, by her service of song, as other women have helped, to comfort the hearts of discouraged disciples; to open up visions of a better life; to place before them holier ideals; to strengthen their hands for a determined warfare against evil and in favor of that which is good? Then, as now, no doubt, men's hearts were inspired by holy song. To have put a sacred song into the hearts of the people, which shall accompany them in all their journeys; which shall be on their lips when in a workshop as well as in church; which shall soothe their children to rest as well as quiet their own fears; which shall restrain unholy ambitions and help one to bear and to battle with the ills of life—is to have made one's self immortal on earth and to have laid up treasure in heaven. May the gift of song and the sweet influence of music never be used other than as the Giver intended, to create within us high and holy aspirations.

At the period when Mary is introduced to us, which is about eleven years after the death of Christ, we find her residing in Jerusalem. She is most likely a widow, and seems to have been

CHRIST AND THE THREE MARYS

for some time a follower of the Master, well-known, and highly esteemed by all. What motives led to the change of her home from Cyprus to Jerusalem, we do not know. Her father may have preferred to locate in the holy city where his Levitical duties called him, and where his children would be more immediately under the influences of Judaism. Or the daughter may have been married and found a new home here, just as new homes are being found all over our land to-day. She seems to have been a woman of considerable means and of good social standing. When Peter was miraculously delivered from prison, "he came to the house of Mary the mother of John whose surname was Mark." It has been surmised that when her brother Barnabas gave up his land and brought the proceeds and turned them into the common treasury of the church, that the sister also gave up her house to be used as a regular meeting place for the disciples. A further confirmation of this is found in the fact that when Peter was released, his first thought was of this house, and when he reached the place he found a band of disciples gathered here praying for him. The traditions of a later age report the meeting place of the disciples, which was probably the home of Mary, as having stood on the upper slope of Zion, and affirmed that it had been the scenes of the wonders of the day of Pentecost, that it had escaped the destruction of the city by Titus and was used as a church in the fourth century. It has been suggested also that she owned a country seat on the slope of Olivet, and which might have included Gethsemane itself. This grows out of the statement made by Mark himself in his Gospel, where he says that on the night of our Lord's betrayal, "There followed him a certain young man, having a linen cloth cast about his naked body; and the young men laid hold on him; and he left the linen cloth, and fled from them naked." (Mark 14: 51, 52.) The circumstances are minutely given, but no names mentioned. The most probable interpretation is that Mark suppressed his own name, while telling a story which he understood best of all. The probability is that either just on the eve of retiring, or having been suddenly awakened out of his sleep, he comes out to see the seizure of the betrayed Master, already known to him, and in some degree believed upon. He is so deeply interested that he follows him even in his thin linen robe. His conduct is such that some of the crowd

are about to capture him; then "fear overcoming shame," he leaves his garment in their hand and flees.

The incidents recorded in the twelfth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, first bring us face to face with this devoted woman and her Christian home. About the year A. D. 44, Herod Agrippa I., having had his territory enlarged, wished to conciliate and win to him the support of the Jewish people, and there was no better way to do that than to persecute this new sect, which was hated by the Jewish party rulers; hence "he put forth his hands to afflict certain of the church." Then he first killed James the brother of John, the son of Zebedee, and one of the three favored disciples. He was very prominent in the counsels of the church at Jerusalem, and was probably for this reason chosen as the first victim. If the king could once get rid of these active leaders of the church, no doubt the organization would soon go to pieces. He is the first of the twelve to drink the cup which Christ drank, and a single line tells the whole story of his brutal murder. It matters little how long we live, but much how well we live.

When the king saw that this pleased the Jews, whose favor he was seeking, he arrested Peter also. James was put to death just before the feast of the Passover, some eleven years after the crucifixion of Jesus. The more rigid Jews deemed it unlawful to defile their solemn feasts with executions, so Peter is put into prison to await the close of the Passover, when he would be brought forth, possibly for trial, at least for execution. Once before he had been placed in prison, but escaped. That he might not again escape their hands, a guard of sixteen men was placed over him, who, by turns, relieved each other of the care of their prisoner. It was the usual custom to chain the prisoner to one soldier so he could not get away, but as an extra precaution in his case, and to make assurance doubly sure, he was chained to two.

To all human appearances, this was a dark hour for the church. Herod has written it down that to-morrow Peter dies. Not because of any wrongdoing on his part, but to secure the favor of wicked Jewish officials. Peter is quietly sleeping between his two guards and chained to each. He is not worried about to-morrow, for the same Lord who cared for him to-day will care for him to-morrow. The doors of the prison are also guarded

and the outer iron gate locked. This prisoner shall not get away. While this is the dark condition of affairs in the prison, under the very shadow of the temple, there is a different situation at Mary's house. It was late at night, if not indeed near three o'clock in the morning. "Many were gathered together, and were praying." These nightly gatherings were continued in later years, in part because of the solemnity which belongs to the hours of the night, and partly to a deeply-rooted impression that the Lord would come again in the night. Hunted, persecuted, tormented, with the governmental authorities arrayed against them, they have no other help than the one of prayer. "Prayer was made earnestly unto God for him." But the "power of fervent and importunate prayer is greater than the power of a king and his soldiers. It moves the hand that moves the world. God is stronger than man. The weapons of the spiritual man are not carnal, but they are mighty." Says Wordsworth, "Herod's soldiers were watching under arms at the door of the prison; Christ's soldiers were watching unto prayer in the house of Mary; Christ's soldiers are more powerful with their arms than Herod's soldiers with theirs. They unlock the prison doors and bring Peter to the house of Mary."

It is night and darkness prevails in the prison, in the streets of the city, in the hearts of the disciples—everywhere. Suddenly a light "shined into his cell" like that which flashed upon the shepherds of Bethlehem. An angel of the Lord appeared and smote Peter, so as to rouse him out of his slumber. The wearied apostle, dreaming of the glorious witness to his Lord, which he was to experience when the day dawned, may have mistaken the angel's voice for that of the guide sent to summon him to execution.

"His dream is changed—the tyrant's voice
Calls to that last of glorious deeds;
But as he rises to rejoice,
Not Herod, but the angel leads."

As he arose, the iron fetters which had bound him to the sleeping soldiers, had already snapped. There is no need of haste for he is in the hands of a Greater than Herod. He must tighten his girdle which confined his tunic, and strap on the light sandals which he had laid aside while he slept. He was to throw around him his heavy cloak, as a protection against the sharp air of an

early spring morning. He and his guide pass the first sleeping sentinel; then the second at the prison entrance, and then went on to the iron gate opening into the street, which opened of its own accord. So rapidly and quietly and unexpectedly to him had all this been done, that he thought it was a dream and not a reality.

As they reached the street his angel guide disappears and he is left alone. Hitherto he thought he saw a vision, but as he stood alone in the midst of the city, and recalled all the circumstances of his deliverance, aided perhaps by the cold, raw air of the morning, he realizes that he has been delivered, and that the Lord has accomplished the result. It were not at all strange that this man, so soon expecting death, and yet so suddenly placed on the unlit streets of the city, in the early morning while yet dark, should have been a little confused. The Lord does for us what we cannot do for ourselves. In other matters he supplements our powers and helps us to help ourselves. Peter, now being on the street, all need of a miracle is over, and he must use his wits as God intended all men to do. The fact that he at once concludes to go to the house of Mary shows that there existed a close tie of friendship between himself and the family and that, as this was the usual place of congregating, he would find some of his friends here, and finally did.

What a wonderful meeting that must have been in Mary's house. "We know not how they shaped their supplications or what it was precisely that they asked; but we may conjecture that they earnestly besought either that he might be delivered, or that he might be sustained and strengthened so to die as to demonstrate to every beholder the beauty and power of that truth which he has so earnestly proclaimed. Nay, the very remembrance of that former deliverance, the report of which perhaps made Herod guard the prison so securely, would make them more earnest and believing in their prayers. They had no misgivings as to God's willingness to hear or ability to help, and so they arranged to meet each other at the throne of grace and make united supplications for the much-loved apostle."

Mary's house was most likely built like other Eastern houses, around an open court. Fronting on the street was the gate or door which opened through the wall into the court. Alongside of

this larger entrance there was often a little gate or door for the admission of members of the family and others. At this door Peter stood and knocked. It was probably some time after midnight. A knock at such an unseasonable hour must have startled that little praying band, who were in danger of being hunted down by their enemies. Is it some one of their own number who could not come any earlier to the meeting? Has the king's appetite for blood been whetted with the death of James, and are the officials of the law here to make other arrests? Who can tell what that signal may mean? The little maid who kept the gate came to learn who was there. Peter must have been a frequent guest at this house, for when the servant girl heard his voice and saw his face she at once recognized him and ran back to the meeting to report the good news of his release.

In due time he was admitted. They had been praying for his deliverance, and yet when it came it was a surprise to them. It seemed too good to be true. After congratulations and thanksgiving for his release, Peter in the hush of the hour gave an account of what had happened to him, "declaring how the Lord had brought him forth out of prison," no doubt in answer to their prayers. They should report these things to the other brethren who were not there, and especially to James, the brother of our Lord, who occupied a foremost place in the church at Jerusalem. It would be a comfort to him to know that Peter was safe and that the Lord had not forgotten his people.

Such were the thrilling circumstances under which we are first introduced to Mary, the mother of Mark. What a commendable record she has made for herself! She was fashioned of heroic material and thus she could hold life, property, position, reputation, all she had, so that all could be used in the Master's service and for his glory. The spirit of persecution was abroad in the land. Those in good social standing would at once be excluded from society and shunned by their former associates if they followed this so-called disturber of the peace, just as men and women are to-day in heathen lands where dense darkness and intense bigotry prevail. Mary's house would be a marked place and might at any time be razed to the ground. She herself might be imprisoned or be put to death as is being done in Armenia at this very hour. Yet she never faltered but went right on in the dis-

charge of her duty. She braved the attacks of the officials, and although she knew that arrangements had been made to put Peter to death on the morrow, she welcomed the stricken disciples to her home, and with them united in fervent petition to the Lord of hosts to come to their relief.

The inspired record gives us no further account of this courageous woman except as we learn it through her son. The assembling at her home of the Master's friends had brought her boy in contact with Peter. He calls him "Marcus, my son," and it is not unlikely he was instrumental in this boy's conversion. Other social influences might have led the boy to destruction as many are being led to-day. These same influences led him into the ministry no doubt with the mother's consent and approval. He was with Paul and Barnabas in their first missionary journey; was with Peter in Babylon (I. Peter 5: 13); was with Paul during his first imprisonment at Rome. He seems to have been with Timothy at Ephesus, where Paul wrote him during his second imprisonment, and Paul was anxious for Mark to come to Rome. And better than all else for us, we have a biography of Christ in the *Gospel of St. Mark,* through which comes to us the results of her influence and life in the blessed work of her son.

The opportunities for such centers of evangelistic work as the home of this woman afforded, can still be found wherever there is, as here, a loyal, courageous soul working for it. "I think now of women of our own generation whose private houses have been the meeting place of many a company for prayer, for conversation, for discussion, for work in behalf of efforts to emancipate our fellow men from bonds of sin. The wounded soldier, the benighted heathen, the oppressed slave, the victims of lust and drunkenness, the helpless children, the homeless orphan, the rich and the poor, the struggling mission school, the working church of Jesus—how many of these and kindred charities have had their birth and foster within the home of the Marys of our times! Still these and kindred causes knock at your gates. Still apostles of Christ lie bound in dungeon chains, and still a trembling church lifts up hands in the night to the God of salvation. Oh, women of America, dedicate your homes to the service of the Son of God. Lay your social influence on the altar of sacrifice unto the Most High."

Claudia Procula===
the Wife of Pilate

"So, with a start,
I brake the bonds of slumber, and I heard—
Making my terror tender—angry roars
As if a hundred beasts; men who cried out,
'Crucify this one! Free us, Bar-Rabban!'
And, drawing nigh my latticed window, saw—
Oh, Jove!—Him of my vision, passing down,
Godlike, but not yet crowned with cruel thorns,
Nor pierced in hand or foot. What shall it mean?
Was that—the Syrian with those searching eyes—
My warner in the dream? Trembling to see,
I snatched me tablets, drove the point i' the wax
Hasteful, as thou didst note, and wrote the word,
'Eheu.' Thou wouldst not heed!"

—*Matthew Arnold, in "The Light of the World."*

Claudia Procula—the Wife of Pilate

PONTIUS PILATE, the procurator of Judea, under whom Christ was put to death, represents to us the authority of the Roman government. The country which had been taken from the Canaanites by Jehovah himself and given to his own people, had been forfeited by them, and a heathen people took possession of it. David and Solomon, who were the envy of the kings around them, have gone; the glory of their kingdoms has gone with them, and another sits upon the throne which God intended for his own. What has led to this remarkable condition of affairs?

The persecutions of Antiochus Epiphanes called forth a glorious resistance, which ended in the independence of Judea. Judas Maccabæus, *"the Hammerer,"* as he was called, a brave, patriotic and competent man, organized his people and led them forth to victory. The battle which really gave his people a season of peace was fought in the year 161 B.C. At this time Judas began to hear something of the power of the people who dwelt beside the Tiber. He had learned of their victory over the Greeks with whom he had struggled, of their successes over the Gauls and the Spaniards, of their power to set up and cast down kings. He is especially attracted by their republican form of government, and by their senate, so much like the old Jewish Sanhedrin, and so he sends to Rome two deputies, Eupolemus and Jason, to propose a league against Syria. The league was formed, and the ambassadors returned in triumph, but the great Jewish leader was not there to hear their report, for he had been killed in battle. His purposes were good, but could he have foreseen the events of the following centuries, he would have witnessed that same power to whom he had lookd for help, crushing out his own people, carrying thousands of them captive and utterly demolishing the holy city. Alas, how little we know of the future or of the consequences of a single act.

There is a painful contrast in the record of the liberation of Judea by the Maccabean brothers, and its misgovernment by their

posterity. Unholy ambition and religious discords soon began to show their baneful results. In 63 B.C. Pompey the Great, fresh from his victory over the last of the potentates of Asia, moved toward Palestine. At Antioch he dissolved the last remnant of the Syrian monarchy, and then advanced toward Damascus. This was a memorable year, for in it occurred the conspiracy of Cataline and the birth of Augustus. Another Jewish embassy comes to the Roman representative at Damascus. Not two such as Judas Maccabeas had sent, who themselves were loyal to their leaders and to the interests of the Jewish nation, and who represented a loyal and courageous people, struggling for their very existence; but they were rival claimants for the empty honor of wielding a scepter as a Jewish monarch. These men, for their own personal aggrandizement, had plunged their country into a civil war, and are now here before a Roman general, willing to take his help at any cost, so their selfish purposes may be secured. Pompey decides in favor of the weaker of the two claimants, Hyrcanus, perhaps with the hope that under him the nation might sooner go to pieces.

Aristobulus, the disappointed claimant, is not willing to surrender his hopes, and so bids defiance to the conqueror of the East. The Roman army now leaves Damascus, spreads itself over the holy land, traverses the Jordan valley, and reaches Jericho, where the soldiers find themselves in the midst of such tropical vegetation as they had never seen before. They travel towards Jerusalem over the same road upon which the Master traveled at a later day, through Bethany and over Olivet, when the beautiful city burst upon their view. The army sweeps around the city and encompasses it. It falls at last after a three months' siege. Thousands were massacred, many sprang over precipitous cliffs and were dashed to pieces, while others died in the flames of their own houses which they themselves set on fire. At the time of the fall of the city, the priests were engaged in their sacred duties. "With a dignity as unshaken as that which the Roman senators showed when they confronted in their curule chairs the Gaulish invaders two centuries before, did the sacerdotal order of Jerusalem await their doom. They are robed in black sackcloth, which in days of lamentation superseded their white garments, and sat immovable in their seats around the temple court

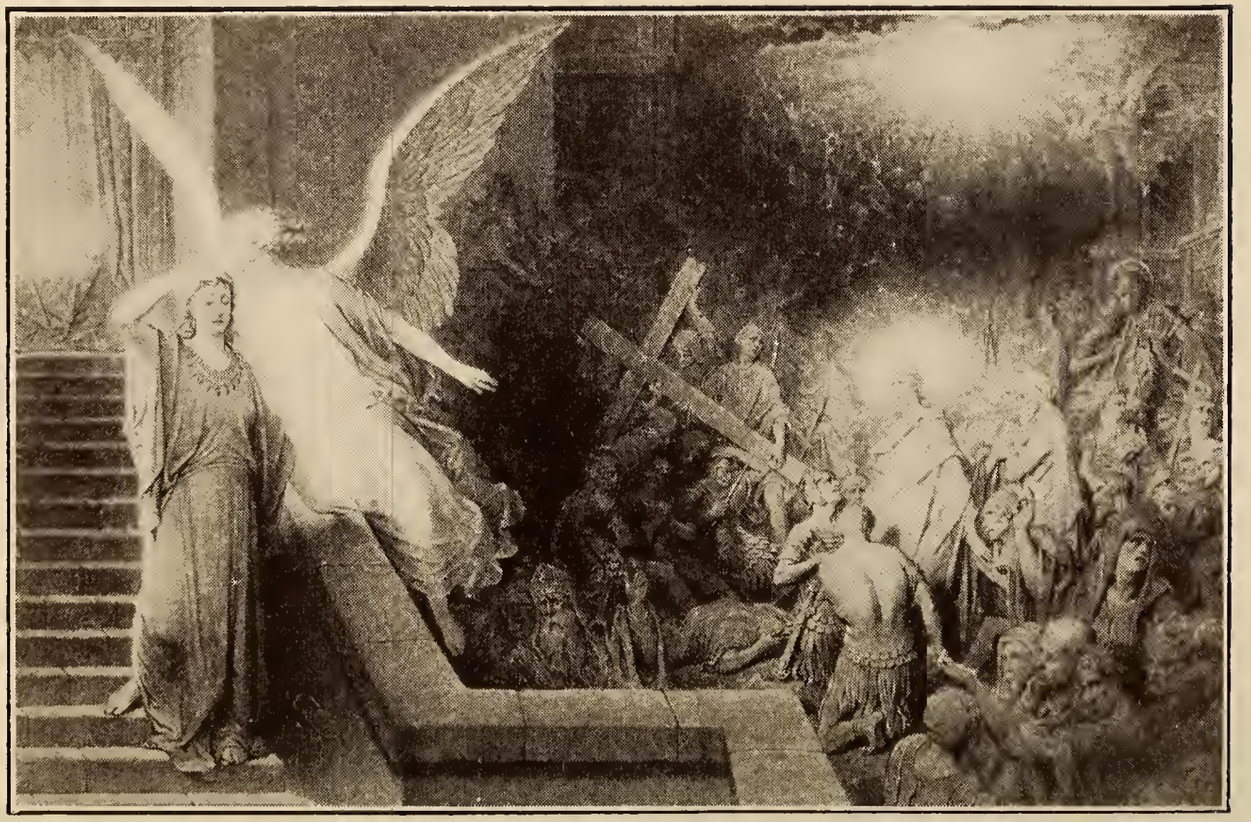
till they fell into the hands of their assailants." When Pompey found his way into the holy of holies, he was amazed to find only a vacant seat, an empty shrine.

From this time forward Rome ruled the people of Israel. At the time of which we are now writing, Herod Antipas under Roman appointment governed Galilee and Petrea, and Pontius Pilate, as procurator, ruled Samaria and Judea. Pilate was the sixth procurator, five having preceded him. It had been foretold that "the sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a law-giver from between his feet, until Shiloh come" (Genesis 49: 10). The Shiloh had come, the sceptre had gone, the nation's independence was lost, her brave men have perished, and the grip of the Roman power is upon her. The Shiloh at this moment is in Pilate's hall before the representatives of the Roman Empire, brought here by his own countrymen, who are false to their own best ideals, false to their history, false to their God, and are clamoring for his death, that their own narrow, selfish teaching may not be interfered with, nor their tyrannical hold on men's minds be overthrown. Pilate sits in the chair of Judah, having been brought there as a result of bitter jealousy, of factional wars, of party spirit, which planned and labored for selfish ends and not for the good of the nation. Similar ruin has this spirit brought elsewhere and such ruin it will bring to us. When the love of any country has died out of the hearts of its people and men labor exclusively for self-aggrandizement regardless of higher interests, the death knell of that people has already been sounded. It is God's law, and has not and will not be repealed. He that will save his life shall lose it, but he that will lose his life for others shall save it. If this American government would continue to exist, it must be administered for the public good, and not for soulless corporations. It must remember that nations are responsible in God's sight, and that the Power which scattered the Jewish nation to the four winds and which pulled to pieces the magnificent Roman Empire, still lives, and in his hands all the nations of the earth are as grasshoppers.

At this stage in his history, Pilate is not in good odor with the Jewish people. Not long after his appointment, he undertook to remove the headquarters of his army from Cæsarea to Jerusalem. The soldiers took with them their standards, which bore the image of the emperor, into the holy city. They were sent in during the

night, and when the people discovered in the morning what had been done, there were scarcely any bounds to their rage. They poured down to Cæsarea in crowds beseeching Pilate to remove these images. After five days of waiting for them to depart, he gave the signal to some concealed soldiers to put them to death, unless they ceased to trouble him. This only increased their determination, and they declared they would rather submit to death than to endure such a violation of their principles. Pilate was compelled to relent and the standards were taken back to Cæsarea. No previous governor had ever ventured on such an outrage. On another occasion he almost drove the Jews to insurrection when, in spite of this first warning, about the images, he hung up in his palace in Jerusalem some gilt shields inscribed with the names of pagan deities, and which were only removed by an order from Tiberius himself. Again there was a revolt of the people when he took from the treasury the money accruing from redemption vows—*the corban*—and misappropriated this fund, for which the Jews had great reverence, to the building of an aqueduct. This riot, according to Josephus, was suppressed by sending among the crowd soldiers with concealed daggers, who massacred a great number not only of the rioters but of casual spectators. It is supposed by some that Barabbas was connected with this insurrection. The slaughter of certain Galileans, referred to by Luke (13:1), most likely at some feast when the blood of the worshipers was mingled with their sacrifices, is another example of how he sought to rule this people. Indeed, riots and massacres were of so frequent an occurrence that it seems needless for the historian to recount them all.

It was the custom for the procurator to reside at Jerusalem during the great feast. It is now Passover time and he is here with his soldiers. At this annual feast, vast crowds come up to the city, many of them are full of religious enthusiasm and imbued with a national spirit. Others gather there who are restless and disquieted because of Roman rule, and the possible danger of insurrection will require Pilate's presence. With the record which he has already made, he will need to do what he can to secure the good will of the influential Jews. He is in his official residence which most likely is the castle *Antonia*. It was close to the temple, had been arranged as a fortress and castle combined, and there



DREAM OF PILATE'S WIFE

he could dwell in the midst of his troops, who would be at his call in any emergency. Jesus had been condemned to death by the Jewish Sanhedrin, but he could not be executed without the sanction of the Roman official. It was now early morning, and the Jewish rulers had been up most of the night in their nefarious business. "The breath of spring was fresh upon the slopes of Olivet, the birds were singing in the olive groves of Gethsemane, and the palm trees of Kedron's vale, as the tumultuous senators pushed out of the hot Sanhedrin chamber in the temple cloisters and thronged the way to Pilate's mansion." This innocent prisoner, most likely chained to a soldier's arm as was their usual custom, was hurried along with them.

As they reached the judgment hall of Pilate, they suddenly stopped. Have they concluded that their prisoner is not at all dangerous, and are they willing to let him go? No such good news as this. These Jewish leaders just now remember that they are holy men, and if they should enter a Gentile house, they would become ceremonially unclean, and would be debarred from the privileges of the Passover. The only thing to be done was to send a message to the governor asking him to come out. We are appalled at such conduct. Their hearts were sufficiently hardened against all justice that they were about to commit a crime without any feelings of contrition, and yet they seem extremely sensitive concerning a small, ceremonial impropriety.

Pilate courteously responds, and comes forth even at this early hour to inquire as to their wishes. He may have been the more willing to do this for the Sanhedrin is making the request. It looks as though they had concluded that a simple request for the life of this Jew would be granted without any especial inquiry, so they simply represent him as a disturber of the peace. But Pilate had too much respect for the Roman sense of justice, at least understood his business too well as a Roman official, to put to death a man without a more definite and serious charge against him. If our surmises are correct, his wife must have known something of the man, and may have communicated her knowledge to her husband. The Jews knew he would take no account of their theological disputes, so they prepare themselves for the emergency by interpreting our Lord's claims from a political standpoint, a sense which he did not mean, and which they knew

he did not mean, and by so doing have him arrested for treason. "We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar, saying that he himself is Christ a King." They think they have caught Pilate now, and on this charge he must act.

Pilate seems to be controlled by two conflicting feelings. If he seemed lukewarm in punishing an offense against the imperial government, it would give the Jews new reasons for accusation against him, and he was not at best in very good repute among them. Then again it seemed to him absurd to think the Sanhedrin would bring this man to trial, because he wanted to free the nation from Roman authority. Suspecting the innocence of the man, and to satisfy himself more fully, he examines our Lord privately. His training, his knowledge of men, and his experience in deciding questions of guilt or innocence, satisfy him there is no danger to the government to be apprehended from this man, who indeed claims to be a King, but whose kingdom he asserts is not of this world. He reports to the Jewish dignitaries the result of his investigations in the words, "I find no fault in him at all." His accusers were greatly disappointed, and in the midst of their reiterated charges he hears the word "Galilee." This suggests to him a way out of the difficulty, and as this man belongs to Herod's jurisdiction he will send him to Herod, who was at that time spending some days in the city. Herod declines to take the responsibility off his hands, so having dressed him in a shining kingly robe, to express his ridicule for his apparent pretensions, sends him back to Pilate. Again the Sanhedrin are before the hall to hear the governor's report: "I have examined the man and find no fault in him. I sent you with him to Herod and he has found no fault in him. I will therefore chastise him and release him."

"I will chastise him," and he an innocent, unoffending man! How the words appall us! They were intended to appease an angry senate with a mob gathered about them, but they served only to inflame their thirst for blood. In order to save him he proposes to release him, as it was customary at the time of the feast to release some one, but they cry out in their furious rage, "Crucify him!" "It is a humiliating spectacle—a judge pleading for the life of one who has been arraigned at his own bar, when he had

again and again pronounced him innocent, and when he had full power to discharge him. How Pilate must have despised that howling mob of bigots, those ministers of religion, raising the tiger cry for blood! How he must have despised himself! He knew that he was doing wrong, violating law, justice, humanity, and honor, but the influence of these yelling senators was needful just then to strengthen him in his position. They could injure him before Tiberius, with the charge that he had released one who set himself up to be a King. He cowered before the fear of offending Cæsar and losing his position." Is it any wonder when the love of place had so obscured the man's sense of justice, when the thought of self and his own interest became more powerful than the success of truth, the protection of innocence, or the honor of his government, that he yielded to the mob and "the voices of them prevailed"? The *Bema*, the portable judgment seat which was carried about by the Roman magistrates, was now brought. In this case it was placed on a tesselated pavement in front of the palace, and on a slight elevation. From this elevation the official decree was to be pronounced. Think of it! Upon this seat sat Pilate to administer justice, and remember that he was about to condemn, and finally did condemn to death, an innocent man, simply because the bigoted Jews—not the rabble, but the priests, the scribes, the doctors of divinity, clamored for his crucifixion.

At this juncture in affairs, a messenger arrives from Pilate's own household. He carries a message from Pilate's wife, most likely written on ivory tablets as was not uncommon, to her husband. In the earlier periods of the nation's history, as long as the commonwealth existed, it was very unusual for the governors of provinces to take their wives with them, and in the regulations which Augustus introduced he did not allow the favor, except under peculiar and specified circumstances. The practice grew more and more prevalent and was customary in Pilate's day. A motion was made in the Roman senate (A.D. 21) that no magistrate to any province should be accompanied by his wife, but it was indignantly rejected. A friendly message which Pilate received, asking him to stop before it was too late to retrace his steps, was in these urgent words, "Have thou nothing to do with that just man, for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him."

We should rejoice if we knew more concerning this woman, who thus throws herself across the pathway of her husband who, perhaps unconsciously to himself, is rushing along to perdition and making for himself a name which shall merit the scorn and contempt and utter loathing of all men until the end of time; but our knowledge is very limited. She at once comes into view, plays a very important part, and then is gone from us forever except as she appears in the traditions connected with the life of her husband. Her name is given as Claudia Procula. She had given up paganism, accepted the true God, and became a proselyte of the gate. As early as the time of Origen (185 A.D.) there was a tradition that she became a Christian. The Greek church has canonized her. She evidently knew something of Christ, for she at once pronounces him a just man, and urges her husband to have nothing to do with his condemnation. She had earnestly been watching the proceedings of the trial, for her message came before the final decision had been given. She must have known that her husband was destitute of principle. He was indeed willing to do right, if he could do so without personal disadvantage. She knew that if these men were determined in their purpose they could finally injure her husband, just as he feared they would and finally did, and his injury she suffers. But in spite of all this, true to her womanly instincts, her faith as a Christian, if she were a Christian, she will be loyal to the truth and save this man's life as well as save her husband from a great crime; and so she interferes with her voice and influence to see that justice is done.

There is nothing unreasonable in the tradition that this woman was a Christian. Paul, in writing to the Philippians from Rome, says, "My bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace" (1:13); the margin reads, "In Cæsar's court." In the closing verses of the epistle he writes again (4:22), "All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Cæsar's household." This must refer to Nero, who was at that time the reigning emperor. Says Dr. Albert Barnes on these verses: "From this it would seem that some of the family of the emperor had been made acquainted with the Christian religion and had been converted. It does not of necessity refer to those related to him, but it may be applied to domestics or to some of the officers of the court." If she were a secret believer, as we know there were others, the plea she made this day

became a confession of her faith in the "just man" whose life that day was at the mercy of a mob led by high officials in the Jewish church. If she were simply the wife of a Roman officer, in whom predominated the Roman sense of justice, unwilling that her husband or her nation should be degraded by such a perversion of justice, she still shows herself to us as one willing at any cost to place herself on the side of truth, where she shall have the approbation of her own conscience, the satisfaction of having, as a loyal wife, earnestly sought to turn her husband from a proposed wrong, and the commendation of coming generations.

This woman was aroused to duty by a dream. "There be those indeed, victims of superstition, who have multiplied dreams of their own making, and brought the dream part of our life into contempt; but God has used the dream through every age of human history, and the vision of the night, and out of these have come strange issues and often beneficent endings. Pilate's wife had a dream by day. If the chief priests and elders were busy in the morning, so the great God, watching over all, sent a daydream upon a good woman. We lock up our dreams and make them night visitants. God sends them at noon, closes the eye, and makes an angel talk to us. He shuts out the vulgar visible world, and makes to pass before the mystical eyes of the soul a panorama of his purpose and meaning, and we come out of that trance with a new world swinging before our bewildered gaze." The Romans had great faith in dreams. Homer declared, "They come from Jove." In obedience to dreams, the great emperor Augustus went begging money through the streets of Rome. Dreams were employed by Jehovah in Old Testament times, occasionally to God's servants during periods of their most imperfect knowledge of him. As the Lord made use of a star to direct astrologers to the cradle of Jesus, so may he have made use of a dream to warn Pilate from a participation in the condemnation of Christ. Nor would an ordinary dream be spoken of in this way as a dream of bitter agony. Neither would such a dream have led a Roman wife to send a dissuasive message to her husband when seated on the judgment seat. Some apparition, something supernatural, something awful to look upon, must have occurred. Strange that a heathen woman should be the only human being who had the courage to plead the cause of the Savior during those dreadful

hours when his disciples forsook him and the fanatical multitudes clamored for his blood.

There is every indication that the procurator was visibly influenced by his wife's earnest appeal. Well would it have been for him had he followed her clearer insight, her more loyal convictions, her revelations from God, and thus have honored his own convictions of duty and saved himself from world-wide condemnation. But, situated as he was, how could he have done as she advised? He was a worldly-minded statesman, conscious of no higher wants than those of this life, and yet by no means unmoved by feelings of justice and mercy; but all his better feelings were overpowered by a selfish regard for his own security. He would not encounter the least hazard of personal annoyance in behalf of innocence and justice. The unrighteous condemnation of a good man was a trifle in comparison with the fear of the emperor's frown and the loss of place and power. This affair, with him, had gone too far to be controlled by a weak man. Before the final order is given, he washes his hands in the presence of that murderous mob, as a sign that he was not responsible for his crime. "I am innocent of the blood of this just person; see ye to it." But alas for this weak man; he was making stains of guilt that day which oceans of water could not wash out. By this official consent, a man whom he knew to be innocent was put to death.

There were a number of courses open to this ruler, each of which would bring different results. He should have given Christ a fair trial, and if found innocent he should have stood by him to the last. Under no circumstances should the prisoner have been given up to this cruel mob. It might have caused a riot, but Pilate had witnessed such before and could afford to participate in another rather than to allow an innocent man to suffer. He had the Roman police within call, and he could have swept the city had the people dared to rebel, and all men of all time would have applauded him. If the worst should come, at the risk of his office or his own life this man should have been defended and the persons disposed to excite a riot be punished if they attempted to carry out their plans. This was the open, manly plan, which a well-balanced ruler would have adopted.

The next plan was to find him guilty and then put him to death. Had the evidence justified such a step, no reasonable man would

have blamed him. This plan was open to him before he gave any decision; even after that, if new evidence came in, he could have changed his mind. He persists, however, in declaring the innocence of the accused, and yet is unwilling or afraid to exercise his authority to defend him. The most unjust and most dangerous thing for him to do, and yet at the same time the thing which seemed to promise the greatest personal safety, was to pronounce him innocent, and yet officially to consent to and order his death. He tried every means except the right one to avoid such a gross inconsistence, but the means used were unavailing. "Poor mockery of a ruler! Set by the Eternal to do right on earth and afraid to do it; told so by his own bosom; strong enough in his legions and in the truth itself to have saved the innocent One and kept his own soul—he could only think of the apparently expedient. Type of the politician of all ages who forgets that only the right is the strong and the wise."

After all Pilate's efforts to avoid giving offense to Cæsar, he was not saved from political disaster. The Samaritans became rebellious and Pilate led his troops against them and defeated them. He went to Rome to answer accusations against him, and found Tiberius dead and Caligula on the throne. Wearied with misfortune he is said to have killed himself. There are various traditions as to where this occurred. One of these is that he sought to hide his sorrows in the loneliness of the mountains by the side of Lake Lucerne, and after spending some years in the recesses of the mountains, in remorse and despair he plunged into the dismal lake which occupies its summit. Says Walter Scott: "According to the popular belief a form is often seen to emerge from the glowing waters and go through the action of one washing his hands; and when he does so, dark clouds of mist gather fast around the bosom of the infernal lake, as it was styled of old, and then wrapping the whole upper part of the mountains, presage a tempest or hurricane which is sure to follow in a short space." It is a type of the unrest of the man who smites unto death the Christ within himself, the voice of conscience within his own soul.

This woman's plea was not granted, but still her act was not in vain. No good deed against wrongdoing is ever in vain. By this act she testified her belief in the innocence of the accused Christ. She did her duty and had the comfort of an approving

conscience, the plaudits of all ages, and the approval of God. Her example has encouraged others to stand for the truth, when all the odds seem to be against them. "Her example is a call to girdle our seats of justice with woman's prayer. Whatever else may be denied her, the right of petition and remonstrance is hers, and in the wise exercise of that right there opens up a path of usefulness which may lead into broad fields of success. Let her plead for good laws and faithful administration, for clean, well-paved streets, that her person and home may be free from the horror of drifting dust, foul with street filth; let her plead for pure water and ample sewerage that her family may be saved from malaria-breeding and pestilence-hatching germs; let her plead for the execution of Sabbath laws, temperance laws, laws against gambling; let her lift her voice for every law and policy that saves husbands, sons, brothers, her fellow-men from peril, and against all men and measures that spread and protect the fatal snares that threaten her peace by imperiling health and morals; let her do all this with such wisdom, zeal, and persistency as women can command, and see if the lagging limbs of reform be not started into fresh vigor. Why should woman be silent on themes like these, when man's partnership, treachery, sluggishness, poltroonery, and covetousness are betraying the interests of community, are sacrificing the welfare of helpless wives and children? Why should not Procula cry 'Pause' when Pilate from the very judgment seat is delivering Christ to doom?"

Lydia---the First European Convert

"What is it, indeed, that we reduce women to, when we argue that they have no right to meddle with public affairs, no right to follow professions, no right to occupy themselves with any really intellectual pursuits, no right to take any interest in aught outside their families, no right to any education save that which is devoted to showing off their charms? Do we not in truth reduce them to the mere slaves of the harem? Do we not, like those who keep such slaves, deny in fact that they have any souls? What can they do with souls if nature means them only to be toys of our idle hours, the adornment of ease and wealth, to be worshiped as idols, but never taken as helpmates, permitted at most to gaze from afar at the battles of life—to crown the victory with a wreath, or to shed weak tears for the dead? But even those who tell us so, or use arguments that mean so, know well that in their hearts they belie the words they utter. They know that in their straits they turn to women for sympathy because women have understood their struggles; they seek women's council because they know that women are intellectually fit to advise them; and they only effect contempt for female capacity because of the pitiful pride that refuses to acknowledge a capacity that in many things is on a level with their own, and if in some things lower, in other things is higher than theirs."

—*John Boyd-Kinnear.*

Lydia—the First European Convert

PAUL, accompanied by Silas, starts on his second missionary journey. His first thought was to confirm and more fully establish the little churches which had been founded on his first trip. He now goes through Syria and Cilicia. At Lystra he finds Timothy, who had been converted during his former visit. His father being a Greek and his mother a Jewess, the young man would no doubt be helpful to him in reaching the Gentiles. He takes him with him as "his son," and thereafter no name is more closely associated with Paul's than that of Timothy. It did not seem to be a part of Paul's plan at present to preach to the Galatians, who were not a very promising people, but the Lord led him thither and he was detained there by illness. He founded several churches here, and then the missionaries retraced their steps. They planned a visit to Bithynia, a wealthy province in the north, but their plans were divinely overruled. They made no attempt to preach in Mysia, probably because of the absence of synagogues, but passed on to Troas where a remarkable event awaited them.

Paul had been laboring for some time among the mixed races of Asia Minor. He was himself a Roman citizen. The many military metaphors in his epistles show that he was struck with admiration for the order, discipline, dignity, and reverence for law which characterized the Roman government. Years after this, he tells in the following language how his thoughts went out toward Rome itself, "I have had a great desire these many years to come to you." He reaches Troas where a surprise awaits him. Troas was the name of a district of country as well as of a town. The region around about extending from Mount Ida to the plain watered by the Simoas and Scamander, was the scene of the Trojan War. "It was due to the poetry of Homer that the ancient name of Priam's kingdom should be retained. This shore has been visited on many memorable occasions by the great men of this world. Xerxes passed by this way when he undertook to con-

quer Greece. Julius Cæsar was here after the battle of Pharsalia. But above all we associate the spot with a European conqueror of Asia and an Asiatic conqueror of Europe, with Alexander of Macedon, and Paul of Tarsus. Here Alexander girded on his armor, and from this goal he started to overthrow the august dynasties of the East. And now the great apostle rests in his triumphal progress upon the same poetic shore. Here he is armed by heavenly visitants with the weapons of a warfare that is not carnal; and hence he is sent forth to subdue all the powers of the West and to bring the civilization of the world into captivity to the obedience of Christ."

Turning from the district to the town of Troas, we must remember it was a seaport town four or five miles from the site of the ancient city. It was built by Alexander the Great, and was called Alexandria Troas. The Romans of that day called it New Troy, and it was one of the most important cities of that section. Julius Cæsar had thought of making it the capital of the Roman Empire. Three centuries later Constantine the Great, before he chose Byzantium, had fixed upon Troas as the future seat of his vast empire. Says Gibbon, "Though the undertaking was soon relinquished, the stately remains of unfinished walls and towers attracted the notice of all who sailed through the Hellespont." The scene of the wonderful poem, Homer's *Iliad,* was laid at Troy, and within our times the wonderful story has been confirmed by the excavations of Dr. Schleiman. Paul understood Greek, and he may have thought of the wonderful deeds of the old Greeks, or the story of Achilles, or may have enjoyed the scenery of the place. He could have appreciated both, but he was a soldier in a different war, and as a soldier of his Master from this point he was to bear the gospel not only to Greece but to all the great West.

Paul happily meets Luke here at Troas, and now there are four of them in this little army of attack. We do not know where Paul first met Luke, but probably at Antioch, and he may have been one of Paul's converts, as was Timothy. Luke was not a born Jew, but was of Gentile descent. The higher ranks of the Romans were averse to the practice of medicine, which they left to their freedmen, and which is a strong indication that Luke himself was a freedman. He seems to have been an educated, well-informed Greek, who was skilled in medical science.

Whether he joined Paul and the rest of the company at Troas by prearrangement, or by a providential necessity and with reference to Paul's delicate health, which had been affected while in Galatia, we cannot tell. He would make a valuable addition to the party and no doubt they appreciated his presence. His medical skill would not only be of great help to Paul, but would be generally helpful in gaining an opening to preach the gospel among the Gentiles, as it helps to-day in our missionary work among the heathen. Paul became deeply attached to him and calls him the "beloved physician." His faithfulness is seen in the touching reference Paul makes in his letter to Timothy, "only Luke is with me." He was with Paul in his journeyings, his dangers, and his shipwreck. He cheered his imprisonment both at Cæsarea and at Rome. He finally became his biographer and with his accuracy and carefulness is due nearly all we know of one who labored more abundantly than all the apostles. His familiarity with naval matters indicates that at some time he may have worked on the merchant vessels coasting from place to place along the Mediterranean. What became of him after the apostle's death we do not know, but it is commonly supposed he was of mature age when he became acquainted with Paul, and survived him some years, dying at the age of about eighty years.

We have no account of any preaching this time while Paul is at Troas. He seems to be here without any mission, but his stay proves to be a very short one. He was divinely hindered from going into Asia. Not having planned to do so, he was yet sent into Galatia. He attempted to go into Bithynia, but was prevented. He went to Troas probably, because having been hindered from preaching in these other places, he may have had an impression that from this seaport he should take passage for some new field, but where he did not know. Like Abraham he started out not knowing whither he should go. But he need not worry, nor was he left long in doubt. He was about his Master's business and the same power which had called him into the work and had led him thus far would guide him still. In addition to the double interference of the Spirit as already seen by Paul, a special vision was necessary to turn his eye toward Europe. Such a mission to Western lands was a difficult undertaking. The conditions under which he had carried forward his work hitherto would be changed.

There would be new difficulties for him to face. He may have queried as to what all these things meant. During the night, "there stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help *us*." He may have recognized the man by his manner of dress or by the words he spoke. These people wanted help against their own blindness and the power of Satan. It is the cry for the gospel in all ages and no Christian can read it without deep feeling. In the morning he tells his companions of the vision of the previous night, and the brief record states, "Immediately we sought to go forth into Macedonia, inferring that the Lord had called us to preach the gospel to them."

That night at Troas, according to human judgment, was one of the most eventful nights in the world's history. On that wonderful vision hung the Christianization of Europe, and all the blessings of our modern civilization. It was more important for the success of God's cause that Paul should go to Europe than to Bithynia. The latter country was early Christianized but not by Paul. The morning sun the following day shone with a new smile upon those Western lands. Four hundred years before this a great army of nine hundred thousand men were being marshaled in these waters to conquer Greece, but it did not after all affect the civilization of Europe. Paul is but one man, with no army behind him and with no sword in his hand, yet he will soon be on his way to Greece. Few, if any, knew of his presence at Troas and probably none cared, but he was the bearer of a message which would change the face of the Western world. He carried the gospel to Europe and from there it came to America, and we to-day recognize him, who never dreamed of this land, as its most important benefactor. He little knew what depended on the decisions of that night and how much was involved in his sailing for Europe. But God knew it all for he planned it all, using, as he often does, apparently weak instruments for the accomplishing of great results. He may sometimes keep us out of avenues which may seem to us very fruitful, because he has more important places for us to enter. Happy is the man who places himself entirely at God's disposal. Macedonia did not know its own need, but God did, and provided for it.

There is now no longer any uncertainty. The morning stars appeared over the cliffs of Mount Ida. The sun arose and spread

over the sea and the islands. The men of Troas awoke to their accustomed trade and labor. Among those who are busy about the ships in the harbor are four Christian travelers who are seeking for a passage to Europe. They carry with them the destinies of untold millions. God had provided a vessel for his ambassadors and they set sail with a favorable breeze. As the south wind sped them on their course, so they made the journey of one hundred miles in two days, which usually took five, did they not have a fresh sign that He who holds the winds in his fist was with them and would bring them to their desired haven? They reached Neapolis, the port of Philippi. It was about eight miles from the city proper. Paul could not linger here, so he passes through the western gate and starts for the town of Philippi.

There is a Roman road direct from Neapolis, paved throughout and cut through the least passable part of a moderate swell of mountains. A missionary who visited this place some years since thus describes it: "When we arrived at the top of the mountain, the place where Paul must have had the first glance of that plain and city where he was to open the proclamation of the gospel on European ground, I turned around to see what impression the spectacle might have made upon him, and truly a more inspiring prospect cannot well be fancied. The road is broad enough and the hills so widening toward the plain, that a very large and rich part of the latter becomes visible at once; and the direction of the road is such as to throw the hill projecting, with the Acropolis on its summit and the city of Philippi at its base, right into the center of the picture. . . . I have no doubt that Paul and his little missionary band stopped here with wonder and delight, and looked down into the field and the plains with anticipations of absorbing interest. It may be they sat down upon some of these rocks to rest themselves after the wearisome mountain was gained, and to strengthen each other in the Lord by pious conversation, and by the repetition of many a precious promise respecting the conversion of the whole world and the eventual universality of Christ's kingdom. It may be that they withdrew a little into a solitary place among these woods to join in prayer for yonder Philippi, for all Macedonia, and for a fallen world."

The ancient site of Philippi is occupied by a very small village named Filiba. There are some extensive ruins here. Says one:

"The remains of the fortress upon the top consist of three ruined towers and considerable portions, walls of stone, brick, and very hard mortar. The plain between exhibits nothing but ruins or heaps of stone and rubbish overgrown with thorns and briars; but nothing is now seen of the numerous busts and statues and thousands of columns and vast masses of classic ruins of which earlier travelers speak. Ruins of private buildings are still discernible, also something of a semi-circular shape probably a forum or marketplace—perhaps the one in which Paul and Silas received their undeserved stripes. The most prominent among the ruins are the remains of an ancient palace, the architecture of which is grand and the materials costly. The pilasters, chapiters, etc., are of the finest white marble and the walls were formerly encased in the same stone, but have gradually been knocked down by the Turks to furnish materials for their preposterous gravestones. A large portion of the ruins is said to be covered with stagnant water."

Philippi was a Roman colony, a military and not a commercial town, and there would not be many Jews there. Probably a good proportion of Greek with the Latin population. There were not enough Jews to support a synagogue, so they had one of their buildings, termed *Proseuchae,* a place of prayer, which was distinguished from a regular place of worship by being of a more temporary nature and frequently opened to the sky. It may have been located outside the gate for greater quiet, or because the people would not allow them to worship inside; they were "by the riverside" in consequence of the ablutions, connected with their worship. Such worship was not distasteful to the Jews. Says Biscoe: "The seashore was esteemed by the Jews a place most pure, and therefore proper to offer up their prayers and thanksgivings to Almighty God. Philo tells us that the Jews of Alexandria, when Flaccus, the governor of Egypt, who had been their great enemy, was arrested by order of the emperor Caius, not being able to assemble at their synagogues which had been taken from them, crowded out at the gates of the city early in the morning to the neighboring shores and, standing in a most pure place, with one accord lifted up their voices in praising God. Tertullian says that the Jews in his time, when they kept their great fast, left their synagogues and on every shore sent forth their

PAUL AND LYDIA AT THE RIVERSIDE

prayers to heaven. And long before Tertullian's time there was a decree made at Halicarnassus in favor of the Jews, which, among other privileges, allows them to say their prayers near the shore according to the custom of their country. It is hence abundantly evident that it was common with the Jews to choose the shore as a place highly fitting to offer up their prayers."

This missionary company probably reached the city during the week and their first business would be to provide for their own independent support while there, to which Luke would be able to contribute by the practice of his business. They probably did no preaching unless in their own rooms. They had not heard of any synagogue, but knowing the custom of the Jews they would look for something of that kind if existing at all, near the river. In going down to the river Gangites they passed under the arch which commemorated the great victory of Philippi, ninety-four years before. In passing to the banks the missionaries were on the very ground on which the battle had been fought, and near which the camp of Brutus and Cassius had stood, separated by the river from the army of Octavianus and Anthony. When they reached the place they found only a few women assembled, and these not all of Jewish birth and not all residents of Philippi. This may have been in part from their husbands' having become negligent in their duty in the absence of the synagogue, or because many of the women were wives of Gentile husbands. This was no time for formal sermons, so they sat down and entered into conversation with this little group of worshipers. Wherever there are unconverted souls who are willing to listen to the truth, there the faithful missionary and the holy preacher may find an audience. Nor was this service without a good result. In that little audience sat a thoughtful woman who was a proselyte to Judaism, and who was in the habit of attending Jewish services. As she sat listening to this man of God, conviction seized her heart. She accepted the truth as spoken by Paul, and in proof of her sincerity, she with all her household were baptized.

The extravagance of the age created a large demand for purple in the market of Rome, and Lydia found room for her trade in this Roman city of Philippi. She was originally of Thyatira, a city on the confines of Mysia and one of the seven churches addressed by John the Revelator. The city was cele-

brated in an early day for its purple dyes and fabrics. Among the ruins of that city has been found an inscription relating to the guild of dyers, curiously testifying to and confirming even the unimportant parts of this story. The business which brought Lydia to Philippi was connected, either with the sale of the coloring matter, or more likely with the fabrics already dyed. The city is still distinguished for its dyers even to this day. "In answer to inquiries on the subject it is said that the clothes which are dyed scarlet here are considered superior to any others furnished by Asia Minor, and that large quantities are sent weekly to Smyrna for the purposes of commerce."

Different accounts are given concerning the origin of this rich color, but all ascribe it to the juice of a certain species of shellfish. It is ascribed by some to the Tyrian Hercules, whose dog, it is said, instigated by hunger, broke a certain kind of shellfish on the coast of Tyre, and his mouth becoming stained of a beautiful color, his master was induced to try its properties on wool and gave his first specimens to the king of Tyre, who admired the color so much that he restricted the use of it by law to the royal garments. The ancients applied the term translated "purple" not on one color only but to the whole class of dyes manufactured from the juices of the shellfish. There was therefore a difference in the color obtained from the purples of different coasts. "The juice is perfectly white while in the vein, but upon being laid on linen it soon appears, first of a light green color, and if exposed to the air and sun soon after changes into a deep green and in a few minutes to a sea green, and in a few more into a blue. Thence it speedily becomes of a purple red, and in an hour more, of a deep purple red, which, upon being washed in scalding water and soap, ripens into a bright and most beautiful crimson which is permanent." The Israelites seemed to have had purple stuff in plenty in the wilderness, which they had likely brought with them out of Egypt. Pliny tells us it was worn by Romulus and the succeeding kings of Rome and by the consuls and first magistrates under the republic. It is said Julius Cæsar prohibited its use by Roman subjects except on certain days. Nero prohibited it altogether upon pain of death. It was bestowed by kings upon their favorites.

Lydia was at once baptized, no doubt in the stream which flowed by the place of prayer. There is some uncertainty as to what is included in the term "household." Meyer thinks most likely they were the female assistants connected with her trade. It might have been these, or her slaves, or her children, or all collectively. This is the first passage in the life of Paul where we have an example of this family religion, to which he so often alludes in his Epistles. We do not know that Lydia had any children, or that she was even a married woman, as there is not the remotest reference to any husband. One of the results of her conversion which at once manifested itself was her hospitality, which elsewhere is so emphatically enjoined on God's people. "If ye have judged me," she said, "to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay there." To do so was not in accordance with the principles which usually governed Paul. While he insisted on the right of every laborer to be maintained by those whom he served, yet that the gospel in his hands might not be misrepresented, he preferred that his labor should be gratuitous. She would not be refused, so Paul and his company accepted her courteous invitation. Her business most likely was a prosperous one, she was evidently a woman of some means, and thus able to take upon herself the additional burden of their support. This would relieve them in good part from outside cares and allow them to give themselves more fully to the preaching of the gospel.

Thus far their work had not been hindered in Philippi. The people met for preaching either in Lydia's house or by the river side. As a result, men and women were converted and a church was built up of both sexes. The work went on for many days, and little did they dream of the trouble which so suddenly was to fall upon them. On their way from Lydia's house, where they lodged, they were followed by "a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination," and in the excited manner of her class she kept crying out, "These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation." Paul did not care even to have true testimony from such a source, as wrong impressions might follow. He was more or less wearied with her continued interruption. He bore the matter for some days, and finally commanded the evil spirit to come out of her. Why he did not do this sooner we do not know, but it is probable that

during these many days of preaching, some of the words uttered by Paul may have penetrated her dark heart, and when she wanted relief it came. As a fortune-teller and diviner, her masters made money out of her. With the evil spirit cast out of her, their gains are gone and she is of no more value to them than any other female slave. Her owners saw the hope of their gains was now all gone and they became enraged. Seizing Paul and Silas, they dragged them into the forum, before the city authorities. As it was simply a depreciation of the value of private property, it was hard to find a charge against these men. Finally they charged, "These men are throwing the whole city into confusion; moreover they are Jews and they are attempting to introduce new observances which we being Roman citizens cannot legally receive or adopt." There was no fair chance for a trial. The word Jew was enough in this proud, exclusive Roman city to inflame the mob. The lictors were authorized to take the prisoners away and beat them. The custom was to do this with rods on the naked body. In the catalogue of some of the sufferings which he endured, Paul says, "Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods." At this time their garments were rudely torn from their backs; "they were hurried off and tied by their hands to the whipping post in the forum; and whether they vainly called out in Greek to their infuriated enemies, 'We are Roman citizens,' or, which is far more likely, bore their frightful punishment in that grand silence which in moments of high spiritual rapture makes pain itself seem painless—in that forum of which ruins still remain, in sight of the lowest dregs of a provincial outpost and of their own pitying friends, they endured, at the hands of those low lictors, those outrages, blows, strokes, weals, the pangs and butchery, the extreme disgrace and infamy, the unjust infliction of which even a hard-headed and hard-hearted Gentile could not describe without something of pathos and indignation."

Nor was this all. The jailor was charged "to keep them safely." He, knowing that such an order meant death to him if they escaped, thrust them into the inner prison and made fast their feet. When we remember what the prisons of England were before the days of Howard, we can judge how dreadful they must have been in the days of pagan Rome. "The stocks" was an

instrument of torture as well as of confinement, consisting of a huge piece of wood with holes into which the feet were placed in such a manner that they were stretched apart so as to cause the sufferer great pain. Sometimes the stocks had five holes, two for the feet, two for the hands, and one for the neck. Well might Paul, while at Corinth, look back with a shudder at this day of cruelty, and remind the Thessalonians (I. Thessalonians 2:2) how he and Silas "had suffered before, and were *shamefully* entreated at Philippi." Paul was just recovering from a severe sickness. He was a Roman citizen, in a Roman city, and entitled to Roman protection, and yet untried, and in response to the cry of a mob he had been stripped of his clothing, violently beaten, and now amid the jeers of the mob was thrust into a stifling and lightless prison, and was to sit there during the long hours of the night with his lacerated back paining him and his feet in such a condition that he could not sleep.

But the brave missionaries were not defeated. They rose to the occasion and comforted themselves during that long night with prayer and song. "They cannot raise their hands nor bend their knees in prayer, but they can lift up their hearts and voices to heaven. Such is the power of joy in the Holy Ghost." They may have sung the Psalms of David, which furnish a storehouse of songs for both Jew and Christian, or they may have been singing one of the hymns which, Pliny tells us, the Christians were accustomed to sing at their meetings before sunrise. Christianity helps its votaries to sing even while the flames of persecution are burning all around them. The criminals in that prison had never heard such songs before, and their ears were keen to listen. The songs were sung by the two most innocent men and yet by those who had been punished the most. Unexpectedly the singing stops, there is a sudden convulsion, the prison walls totter, the doors of the jail fly open wide, the prisoners' chains are loosed from the staples on the wall. Starting from his sleep the jailor sees the prison doors wide open, and concludes his prisoners have fled. This means death to him in the morning, and to avoid such ignominy he will take his own life, but Paul cries out to him, "Do thyself no harm: for we are all here." Quickly securing lights he releases his prisoners from the stocks, and leading them out from their dark dungeon he cried out, "Sirs, what must I do to be

saved?" After what has happened he realizes that he is in the presence of men of special power. The apostles, bruised and beaten as they have been, make known to him "the word of the Lord." Pitying their condition he tenderly washes their lacerated backs, and immediately afterward himself and whole household are baptized in the faith. He takes these missionaries upstairs into his own apartments, places food before them, and rejoices greatly with all his house, having believed in God. This looks like a sudden conversion, and yet "it would be nothing strange if, during the several days or weeks that Paul and Silas had been at Philippi, he had heard the gospel from their own lips, and had been one among those whom they had urged to repent and lay hold of Christ."

Day dawned and the Roman officials were troubled. They sought for some reason to get rid of their prisoners as easily and quietly as they could, and therefore sent word to the jailor, "Let these men go." The jailor reports the words to Paul, but he utterly refuses to go out in any such a clandestine manner. He was a Roman citizen, as such he had been grossly insulted, and had a right to an apology from these reckless magistrates. "He demanded this acknowledgment, not only to teach them a lesson and to inspire the little church with courage, but because his rights and his manhood had been violated." He secured his end. The officials came and "besought them" and having brought them out, "asked them to go away from the city." As soon as they are out of prison, they go straight to the home of Lydia. Here they meet the believers in Jesus once more, and the number must have been increased, for "the brethren" are mentioned, and he speaks to them words of comfort and good cheer. Lydia's home is still the meeting place. Bruised and beaten and disgraced before the public as he has been, she still has a warm welcome for him. The apostles know where to go to find sympathy and appreciation, as certainly as did Peter, when, having been left by the angel, he finds the house of Mary, the mother of Mark. Lydia has a warmer love for these missionaries than ever. They have stood like Christian soldiers, and their God has vindicated them. Their own personal work so auspiciously begun has been ended by a Gentile persecution, but the Lord will take care of his own. They

go to establish other churches elsewhere, while Luke is left behind, possibly because he has found an opening for the exercise of his art, and because he may be able to guide and strengthen that little band of devoted followers in the house of Lydia, for whom there are still some persecutions in store.

There is no doubt that Lydia had much to do in the founding of this church at Philippi. The fact that she was the first convert, that she was a business woman and had some means, would give her special influence. Says Dr. Farrar: "There are some evidences that among the Macedonians women occupied a more independent position and were held in higher honor than in other parts of the world. In his Epistle to the Philippians, St. Paul makes prominent mention of two ladies, Euodia and Syntyche, who were well known in the Christian community. The part that women played in the dissemination of the gospel can hardly be exaggerated, and unless it was a mere accident that only women were assembled in the proseucha on the first Sabbath at Philippi, we must suppose that not a few of the male converts mentioned afterwards were originally won over by their influence." While this is a personal letter, in the main full of compliment for these people, he does not mention any names. He does exhort that they "help those women which laboured with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and with other of my fellow laborers, whose names are in the book of life."

If Lydia had been living, she most assuredly would have been remembered in this Epistle. That she is not mentioned leads to the inevitable conclusion that she either had died, or during the intervening years since Paul was first there, she may have returned to her native city of Thyatira. It is a singular fact in the providence of God that Paul was forbidden to go into Asia but sent to Macedonia, and yet his first and most important convert here is herself a native of Asia. It may not be impossible that this woman carried the gospel back to the very country which Paul was not allowed to enter. Says Conybeare, "The direct influence of Lydia may be supposed to have contributed more to the establishment of the church of Thyatira addressed by St. John than to that of Philippi."

The opening of Lydia's heart was not her own work, nor yet Paul's, but the work of the Lord. Paul preached to her the truth of God, the Holy Spirit convicted her of sin, and in response to this divine influence she accepted the truth. When we learn who she was and what she did, we are not surprised that the Lord should distinguish her by his blessing. "It is in agreement with his usual ordinance that they who seek shall find. For observe her conduct—she was but a sojourner in Philippi, come hither as a seller of purple cloth, for which part of Asia was famous. But she had not, when she left home, left her religion behind her. She had sought out those who had worshiped God, and had gone with them to a place of prayer. Neither was she so engrossed with worldly affairs as to neglect all other things. She was not in Jerusalem or in Judea where the Sabbath would be observed by all; but she was in a heathen city where it would be observed by none but Jewish residents. She might therefore have carried on her trade and sold her purple cloth; but she had been brought to the knowledge of that God, who, when he made the world, blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it; and therefore we find her not in the market, nor offering her purple to the passerby, but joining a party which had gone out of the city by a riverside, where prayer was wont to be made."

"Fellow-Laborers With Paul."

"Those women which labored with me in the gospel, and others of my fellow-labourers, whose names are in the book of life."—(Philippians 4: 3.)

"They lived and they were useful; this we know
And naught beside;
No record of their names is left to show
How soon they died.
They did their work, and then they passed away—
An unknown band—
And took their places with the greater host
In the higher land.

"And were they young, or were they growing old,
Or ill, or well,
Or lived in poverty, or had much gold,
No one can tell.
One only thing is known of them: they were
Faithful and true
Disciples of the Lord, and strong, through prayer,
To save and do.

"But what avails the gift of empty fame?
They lived to God;
They loved the sweetness of another Name,
And gladly trod
The rugged ways of earth, that they might be
Helper or friend,
And in the joy of this, their ministry
Be spent and spend.

"No glory clusters 'round their names on earth,
But in God's heaven
Is kept a book of names of greatest worth;
And there is given
A place for all who did the Master please,
Although unknown,
And their lost names shine forth in brightest rays
Beside his own.

"Oh, take who will the boon of fading fame!
But give to me
A place among the workers, though my name
Forgotten be;
And if within the book of life is found
My lowly place,
Honor and glory unto God redound
For all his grace!"

—*Marianna Farmingham.*

Phoebe---an Early Deaconess

"It is only the teachings and influences of that divine religion which made Bethany the center of true social banquetings to the wandering and isolated Man of Sorrows, which can keep the soul alive amid the cares, the burdens, and the duties which bend down every son and daughter of Adam, however gilded may be the outward life. How grateful then should women be to that influence which has snatched them from the pollutions and heartless slaveries of paganism, and given dignity to their higher nature! It is to them that it has brought the greatest boon, and made them triumphant over the evils of life. And how thoughtless, how misguided, how ungrateful, is that woman who would exchange the priceless blessings which Christianity has brought to her, for those ornaments, those excitements, and those pleasures which ancient paganism gave as the only solace for the loss and degradation of her immortal soul."

—*Dr. John Lord.*

Phoebe—an Early Deaconess

THE word which we translate "deacon" means in general "minister," "servant," "attendant." In the New Testament it is used to designate the act of ministering or serving in a general way, and only three times probably is it used in the modern technical sense of deacon. The word was, however, soon appropriated to the specific office in the church. We have a graphic account of the origin of this "office of help" in the sixth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, where a voluntary community of goods was adopted by the Christians of Jerusalem. There was a complaint on the part of the Hellenists, or Greek Jews, that their widows were neglected in the distribution of food and alms. This supposed neglect may have been owing to the fact that these widows were not known, being foreigners and backward, or some little jealousy may have existed between the proper Hebrews and their brethren from other lands. At first the apostles seemed to have attended to this matter themselves, but as the church grew, it became more and more impracticable to care for these outward concerns without interfering with their proper spiritual work. They asked for the appointment of helpers in this work and suggested that seven men be appointed who, being chosen by the people, the apostle set them apart by prayer and the laying on of hands.

This example of the church at Jerusalem spread to other churches. The probability is that these officers existed in all the churches planted by Paul, as he gives to Timothy and Titus special instructions in regard to their election and qualifications. Says Stanley: "The deaconate was the oldest ecclesiastical function, the most ancient of the holy orders. It was grounded on the elevation of the care of the poor to the rank of a religious service. It was a proclamation of the truth that social questions are to take the first place amongst religious instructions. It was the recognition of political economy as a part of religious knowledge." "Their business primarily was in the care of the poor and sick.

This would soon come to associate with itself a kind of pastoral care, for poverty and sickness offer the best opportunity for instruction, exhortation, and consolation. Men of strong faith and exemplary piety, of good report, upright, temperate, free from covetousness, and well instructed in the faith, were the men wanted for this office."

"Besides this class of helpers, we find in the apostolic church the order of female deacons, or *deaconesses,* which was supplementary to the other office and was kept up in the Greek church down to the thirteenth century. It is commonly regarded as having originated among the Gentile Christians, where women lived in greater seclusion, and their intercourse with men was more restricted than among the Jews. But aside from any rules of propriety the general need required that for special pastoral service, and the care of the poor and the sick among the female part of the congregation, there should be a corresponding office. Here was open to women, to whom the apostles forbade any active part in the public assemblies, a noble field for the unfolding of their peculiar gifts, for the exercise of their love and devotion, without any departure from their natural and proper sphere. By means of this office they could carry the blessings of the gospel into the most private and delicate relations of domestic life, and, unseen by the world, might quietly and modestly do unspeakable good. To this care of the widows of the poor and the sick, as in the case of the male deacons, various other services no doubt came to be added, though we have no distinctive account of them. Among these we reckon the education of orphans, attention to strangers, the practice of hospitality, and the assistance needed at the baptism of females."

The existence of such deaconesses in the apostolic church is placed beyond all doubt by the statement of Paul in Romans 16: 1, where he commends to the interest of the Christians at Rome Phœbe, and describes her as a deaconess "of the church which is at Cenchrea." It is thought by many that Tryphena, Tryphosa, and Persis, who are praised (v. 12) for their labor in the Lord, most likely served the Roman church in the same capacity. These officials appear to have been commonly aged and experienced widows, sustaining a fair reputation and fitted to guide and instruct those who were young and inexperienced. The Apostolic Constitution says, "Ordain a deaconess who is faithful and holy

for the ministries toward the women." Pliny, in his letter to Trajan, says, when speaking of the efforts which he made to obtain information respecting the opinions and practices of Christians, "I deemed it necessary to put two maid servants who are called *deaconesses* to the torture, in order to ascertain what is the truth." One of the reasons assigned for this appointment among the Gentiles was that women, for the most part, were secluded and not permitted to mingle in society with men as is the custom now, and therefore it was necessary to appoint aged and experienced females to instruct the young, to visit the sick, to provide for them, and to perform the services which the male deacons performed for the whole church.

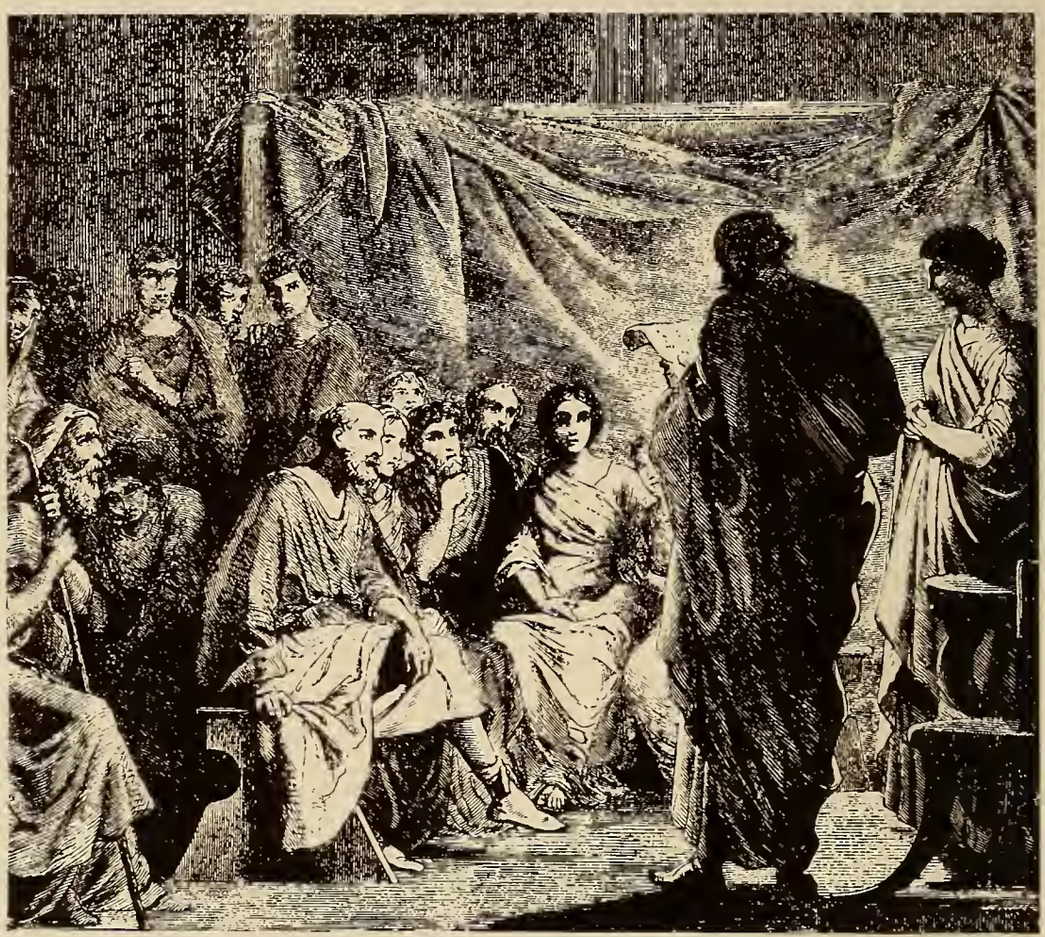
The Puritans in England in the sixteenth century recognized deaconesses as a proper office in the church, as will be seen from the following extract concerning their requirements as given by Neal in his *History of the Puritans*: "Touching deacons of both sorts, namely, men and women, the church shall be admonished what is required by the apostle, and that they are not to choose men of custom or course, for their riches, but for their faith, zeal, and integrity; and that the church is to pray in the meantime to be so directed that they may choose them that are meet. Let the names of those that are thus chosen be published for the next Lord's day, and after that their duties to the church, and the church's duty toward them; then let them be received into their office, with the general prayers of the whole church."

"The advantages resulting to a Christian community from such an order are too obvious to require exposition. It has been a serious misfortune to the church at large that the office had been allowed to fall into disuse; and the widespread institution at the present day in the churches of Great Britain and America of ladies' district-visiting societies, Dorcas societies, and such like, satisfactorily shows the necessity of practically supplying, to some extent at least, this primitive office." (Chamber's Encyclopedia.)

The mention of Phœbe's name informs us of a Christian church at Cenchrea, and this is the only mention we have of it. It was probably established by Paul during his stay at Corinth. Corinth was located on the middle of the isthmus and had two harbors or ports. Cenchrea was on the east about nine miles from the city. It opened into the Ægean Sea and was the principal

port; Lechæum was the port on the western side. On the isthmus between these two ports the *Isthmian games* were celebrated, to which the apostle so frequently makes reference. The first bishop of this church is said to have been named Lucius and to have been appointed by Paul. The site of this port is now occupied, we are told, by a single farmhouse. Close to the sea, and in part even covered by its waters, are the foundations of a variety of buildings, the plans of which may yet be traced, as the walls still remain to the height of from two to three feet and a half, Some traces of the moles of the port are still visible. In all probability the church at this point was not a very large church, or other mention would have been made of it elsewhere. We may safely infer, therefore, that it was small, and what was customary in the matter of female administration in so small a church would be found in the larger; more strictly speaking, it will be found in the smaller because already existing in the larger churches and mainly copied from them.

This sixteenth chapter of Romans gives us an interesting insight into the mind and heart of Paul. It shows the strong personality of his affection. A philanthropist is especially interested in reforms; a philosopher in the discussion of abstract principles; a friend in those individuals who are dear to him. Here is a man who seems to be all absorbed, on the one hand, in the settlement of world-wide problems, and yet is never forgetful or careless concerning individuals. After all, his work was very largely a personal work, as is shown in his ministry at Philippi, at Athens, at Corinth, and at Ephesus. He seemed to come close to men, knew them by name, and as such remembered them. He was never at Rome up to this time, and yet here are the names of twenty-seven persons, men and women residing at Rome, whose names are embalmed and will be kept as long as the Book endures. Most of them, no doubt, were persons from humble spheres in life. How, then, could this man, so absorbed with important themes, having on his shoulders the care of all the churches, still keep in memory and be able to name so many of these people? It shows that this grand man, whose mind has been supposed to be all logic, was in good part love, and that he was a true pastor and personal friend, only anxious for the acceptance of the great principles of truth because they would make men better and develop



ROMAN CHRISTIANS READING PAUL'S EPISTLES

into that glorious manhood found in the man Christ Jesus. In this list of names specially worthy of mention is *Phœbe, our sister.*

How he knew so many of these people, we are not sure. The name of the founder of the church at Rome, if there was a founder, has not been kept for us, has not even been handed down by tradition. Had any of the apostles been instrumental in its start the fact would hardly have failed to be recorded somewhere. From references in Paul's Epistles it is evident the majority of the church were of Gentile origin. It is most likely it was formed at first of private Christians, converted in Palestine, who had come from the eastern part of the empire to reside at Rome, or who had brought back Christianity from one of their visits to Jerusalem as "strangers from Rome" at the day of Pentecost. Among the immense multitude who gathered at that capital city for political and commercial reasons, there would no doubt be representatives of every form of religion which had found a foothold in any of the provinces. The probability is that these were persons whom Paul had met elsewhere in connection with other churches, many of them possibly his own converts. For business or for other reasons, they had gone to the capital of the nation, and Paul, in the multiplicity of his cares, had still remembered their names and their present location, and desires to encourage them by this personal mention.

Phœbe, therefore, was a member of the church in Cenchrea, probably established by Paul, and had been set apart to the official position of a deaconess. It is most likely she was a widow of consideration and wealth. It seemed to be a requisite to this office that widows of age and experience should be selected. Paul calls her "our sister," showing that she was in good and regular standing in the church. She had been a helper to Paul himself in his work. This may have been, as with Lydia in opening up her house for his preaching services, or his entertainment and in ministering to his wants. In addition to this, she had been a "succorer of many." "The word here used means *a patron, a help,* and was applied by the Greeks to one who presided over an assembly, to one who became a patron of others, who aided or defended them in their cause, and especially to one who undertook to manage the cause of strangers and foreigners before the courts. It was, therefore, an honorable appellation." She had cared for the sick,

looked after the poor, provided for the strangers, and thus magnified her office in administering to the wants of many; a woman who was of so much importance at home and who had done so much to aid the cause of Christ, had a claim on the respect and co-operation of Christians everywhere.

Paul asks these Christians at Rome to "assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of you." He evidently knew that she was entirely worthy of their confidence, and would not make any unreasonable demands upon them. What this business was, we do not know, as no record has been made for us. Conybeare and Howson say, "From the use of the legal terms it would seem that the business on which Phœbe was visiting Rome, was connected with some trial at law." It was evidently a matter of importance, otherwise Paul would not so earnestly have asked them to aid her in her plans and to further her business. With the restraints thrown around Greek women in those days, it was no small matter for a woman to start out alone, to go to so prominent a place, on an important mission. The fact that Paul not only so highly commends her and calls upon those to whom she is going for their help, but also entrusts to her a valuable message of his own, shows that he had full confidence in her integrity and ability to do any work that she undertook. This might have been official business which was calling her there; not simply a matter of personal interest, although as a woman of property this is not improbable, but she may have been sent as a representative of the little church at Cenchrea or the greater one in Corinth to look after the interest of some of the members or to see that justice was done to those she represented.

Paul is spending three months in Corinth probably from November A.D. 57 to February A.D. 58. Before this time he had desired to go to Rome, but had been hindered. He would no doubt like to look in on this capital city because he is himself a Roman citizen. He would be glad also to see the members of the church there, many of whom he knew, some of whom, no doubt, were his converts and who entertained for him a very warm affection. At present he is occupied in gathering funds for the poor saints at Jerusalem which he will soon carry to them. He hopes to be preserved so that in the near future he may be able to visit the church at Rome. To compensate in part for his absence, and to

prepare them for his visit which he hoped soon to make, he writes to them a letter which has been the wonder and admiration of the Christian church. The church at Rome was partly Jew and partly Gentile, but Paul has learned that this gospel which he has been preaching will save any and all, of whatever name or sex or nationality. "It is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first and also to the Greek." Strange to say, when he did get to Rome it was as a prisoner, taken there to secure that justice which he felt would be denied him elsewhere.

The use of written communications had been familiar to the Jews from a very early period. When the Jews became Christians they would naturally need advice and counsel on many matters in connection with this new faith. It was natural that St. James should write to the small Jewish-Christian "synagogues," "of the twelve tribes." So when Paul had founded mixed churches, partly of born Jews and partly also of heathen-born converts, he followed the example of others and wrote to these communities when he could not visit them. Such letters would seem to those receiving them to be even more effective for their instruction than the spoken address. They could be preserved and be read and read again, hence were highly valued. Paul places as much authority on these as on his spoken words, and required some of them to be read before the assembled church. Others were a kind of circular letter to be sent from one church to another. These letters were probably among the earliest specimens of a distinctive Christian literature. The story of our Lord's life and death up to this date was probably handed down by oral tradition rather than by any formal written narratives such as we now have. The scriptures of the Old Testament were still the basis of proof and to them the apostles continually appealed. Jesus had come to fulfill the ancient scriptures and he would soon return again when the final end should come. All that seemed necessary then were letters which met the questions of the moment and cheered the brethren in the midst of present distresses.

Paul was not disposed to sit down in the quiet of his own room and prepare systematic compositions, and if he had been, his wandering, busy life would have prevented it. Writing was not pleasant to him, for it required a sedentary activity which he did

not enjoy. Much of what he has given us was most likely dictated to an amanuensis, who was accustomed to the stylus or pen, and hence Paul spake only what others put down. He does not seem to have paid much attention to fine literary finish or logical connection as a literary man would have done. It seems at times as if he may have had these letters read over to him when finished, and he would insert what seemed to him desirable at the time, without any special concern as to the continuity of thought. When all was on the sheet which he cared to have there, it was signed by himself as "the token" of its being genuine, for false documents were circulated by his opponents as coming from him. Sometimes he goes as far as he did to the Galatians and adds a postscript saying to them, "See with how large letters I have written unto you with mine own hand." The roll having been completed was duly sealed up, and sent by some reliable messenger to its place of destination. The Roman government had arrangements for carrying its own official correspondence, but no institution like our postal service for carrying private communications.

When this Epistle to the Romans was completed, it was committed to Phœbe, who started with it on her journey to Rome, while Paul started toward Jerusalem to turn over his collections for the poor. It is a question if any woman ever carried a more valuable document. Luther says, "It is the masterpiece of the New Testament, and the purest gospel, which can be never too much read or studied, and the more it is handled the more precious it becomes." Coleridge characterizes it as "the most profound work in existence." Dr. Schaff asserts that it "presents the most complete and systematic view of Paul's theology, and is the most important dogmatic portion of the New Testament." Phœbe was familiar with Paul and his work at Corinth, and no doubt had some adequate conception of the value of the document which had been committed to her and for whose transmission to the church at Rome she was responsible. How carefully she guarded it and how well was her work accomplished, is known from the fact that it reached the church at Rome and from it has gone forth to bless other churches and other peoples, and to-day is everywhere esteemed as the great masterpiece of the apostle's writings.

She no doubt traveled on some merchant vessel sailing from Corinth to Rome. When she reached the place she found no mean city. Within a circuit of little more than twelve miles, more than two millions of people were crowded. With so many people together she would find all the contrasts which are seen in a modern city, every possible degree of condition between luxury and squalor, wealth, and want. "The free citizens were more than a million; of these the senators were so few in number as to be hardly appreciable; the knights were not more than ten thousand; the troops quartered in the city may be reckoned at fifteen thousand; the rest were the *plebs urbana*. In ancient Rome the luxury of the wealthier classes did not produce a general diffusion of trade. The handicraft employments and many of what we should call professions were in the hands of slaves, and the consequence was that a vast proportion of the *plebs urbana* lived on public or private charity. Yet were these pauper citizens proud of their citizenship, though many of them had no better sleeping place for the night than the public porticoes or the vestibules of the temple. They cared for nothing beyond bread for the day, the games of the circus, and the savage delight of gladitorial shows. The number of slaves was perhaps about a million. Every kind of nationality and religion found its representative in Rome. Rome was like London with all its miseries, vices, and follies exaggerated, and without Christianity."

It is commonly supposed that the church at the time Phœbe visited it was composed of Jews and Gentiles in about equal portion. The gospel had therefore to contend here with both Judaism and heathenism. So far as we can judge from the names given us, the members of the church belonged, for the most part, to the middle and lower grades of society. This would be entirely natural. Among the less wealthy merchants and tradesmen, among the petty officers of the army, among the slaves and freedmen of the imperial palace, whether Jews or Greeks, the gospel would first find a firm footing. From there it would gradually work upwards and downwards, but the church of Rome especially at that time would be no exception to the general rule that "not many wise, not many mighty, not many noble" were called.

As soon as Phœbe reached the city she would find the one whom Paul had designated to receive the document which she had

brought and would turn it over to him. If no one had been mentioned by him, she would find through the parties named some who could officially receive it. The Sunday after her arrival would be a red-letter day in the little community, for the precious epistle would be read and many inquiries would be made of Phœbe, who had brought it, concerning the writer and the progress of the work. They would have a warm appreciation of the man who had such an affection for them, and who was standing so earnestly for a salvation for all men. Nor would the interest stop with a single reading. It would be preserved by some special official, and be read time after time as a sacred treasure yielding permanent instruction and comfort. Possibly copies would be made from it for their own use and the original document be passed on to other churches as a kind of circular letter. As far as they could afford it, copies would be made for individual members to be kept in their own households, for their own personal use, and thus in a short time copies of the document would be multiplied.

This is the last we know of Phœbe, the honored messenger for Paul. She had served her own church at Cenchrea faithfully, and on account of such faithfulness was promoted to the office of "deaconess," the first one of whom special mention has been made. Alone she starts on a journey of many miles either on private business for herself or on official business for the church. She receives the highest commendation from Paul, which commendation has come down to us through the centuries and has made her name immortal. She carries to this metropolitan church this magnificent treatise on the power of the gospel to save all men, and thus brings joy and gladness to this little company of believers, living in the midst of a desperately wicked city. Of the blessed work she did we shall never fully know. She shows us that there is a place in the Christian church for all those who are anxious to spend and be spent for the service of the Master. There is a service for all those who are willing to serve irrespective of sex or nationality. If we are faithful and competent, our colaborers will promote us. Whether at work in our own homes, or traveling to foreign cities, we shall still be representing the Master and may bear his truth to other hearts waiting for the hope and inspiration which we can bring.

"Let me not die before I've done for thee
My earthly work, whate'er it may be.
Call me not hence, with mission unfulfilled;
Let me not leave my space of ground untilled;
Impress this truth upon me, that not one
Can do *my* portion that I leave undone.

"Then give me strength all faithfully to toil;
Converting barren earth to fruitful soil.
I long to be an instrument of thine,
For gathering worshipers unto thy shrine;
To be the means one human soul to save
From the dark terrors of a hopeless grave.

"Yet most I want a spirit of content
To work where'er thou'lt wish my labor spent;
Whether at home or in a stranger's clime,
In days of joy, or sorrow's sterner time;
I want a spirit passive, to lie still
And by thy power, to do thy holy will.

"And when the prayer unto my lips doth rise,
Before a new home doth my soul surprise,
Let me accomplish some great work for thee,
Subdue it, Lord; let my petition be,
'Oh, make me useful in this world of thine
In ways according to *thy* will, not *mine*.'"

FRANCES E. WILLARD
A Representative Woman of To-Day

The Women of To-day

"I appeal to all that mass of thought which forms the public opinion by which we are governed, to give to the women of the present and of coming generations only a fair chance. Let us think of them and deal with them as fellow workers with us, it may be in different departments, but at least in the one great duty of doing some good on earth. Let us teach them and train them so that they can work with us in that duty. Shall we in doing so make them unwomanly, unwifely, unmotherly? No; rather more perfect in all womanly gifts and graces, of which those will first enjoy the happiness who are nearest to them in their homes. We cannot unsex woman by cultivating more highly the qualities that are the especial glory of their sex. We shall not make them masterful by teaching them how best they can serve. Allowed to only expand, allowed to be bestowed on a wider circle of sympathies, allowed to seek out a sphere beyond the range of self interest, the purity, charity, and tenderness that is in them will be enhanced in strength, and will become to us the richer blessing. Women and men will be drawn the closer in the bonds of mutual service, and love and comfort, when we seek woman's aid and train them to give their aid, no longer only in our idleness and amusements, but in the daily rounds of duties which make the noblest portions of our lives."

—*John Boyd-Kinnear.*

The Women of To-day

THIS volume would not be complete, in the judgment of the author, if it did not call attention to the condition of woman in heathen nations, and the exalted position which she occupies wherever the teachings of Christianity have entered into the hearts and lives of the people. We have already learned that among the Hebrews the position of woman was quite high compared with that which she occupied in the adjacent nations. Miriam heads the bands of women who celebrate in song the overthrow of enemies. Deborah appears as a prophetess and a judge. The young maiden goes out to meet her father with timbrels and dances. Woman was consulted by high priest and king, as in the case of Huldah. "And while the effect of polygamy was disastrous, so far as that obtained before the captivity, and while it is obvious that the husband, not the wife, was the acknowledged head of the household, in independence of whom the wife could enter on no engagement, the dower was given to the wife, not with her. The modern harem was unknown; the matron walked abroad unveiled; her husband's home was esteemed her 'rest.' She had a large authority in the family, and the grace and force of her character and mind were honored, cultivated, and allowed opportunity." The Scriptures make many references to the power and charm of womanhood. There is perhaps no finer description of the wise woman contained in any literature, than is the poem in the last chapter of the Book of Proverbs, added to the advisory words of the mother of Lemuel. Such a picture could not have been possible except among a people where woman was appreciated and honored.

And yet the position which woman occupied in the earlier ages, even among these Hebrews, was not the true place which she was yet to occupy. It was only a partial light, and prophetic of what was to be in the noon-day brightness of the sun of Christianity. It was infinitely in advance of what was found in other nations. It was the earnest of that richer development which should come

when the gospel of Christ should everywhere prevail. It was the flower, the rich fruitage of which we see in our own time, and which we shall see in more abundant fullness as the principles of divine truth more and more have sway over the nations of the earth.

So closely is she identified with the progress of the race that you can measure the moral status of any nation by the estimate in which woman is held among them. If the nation is given to license and sensuality, as in the main is true of the Turkish nation to-day, you may be very certain that the appreciation for woman is at a very low ebb. If, on the contrary, the nation is on a high moral plane, you may be just as certain that the mothers and sisters of this nation are looked up to as containing within them something of the divine. "It is a fact, significant for the past, prophetic for the future, that even as Dante measured his successive ascents in Paradise, not by immediate consciousness of movement, but by seeing an ever lovelier beauty in the face of Beatrice, so the race now counts the gradual steps of its spiritual progress out of the ancient heavy glooms toward the glory of the Christian milennium, not by mechanism, not by cities, but by the ever new grace and force exhibited by the woman, who was for ages either the decorated toy of man or his despised and abject drudge."

When Paul went forth to propagate the new faith, he did not go into the rude and barbarous districts, but into the cities, the very centers of civilization. He was a man of keen intelligence, wide experience, conversant with affairs, of liberal tendencies, who would draw to his support whatever would tend to open his way to the Gentile world. He spent many months in preaching to the people of Corinth, one of the most renowned of the Grecian cities. Here the Isthmian games were still celebrated. It was an intellectual as well as a political center of Greece. It was renowned throughout the world for its commercial activity, its learning, and its fondness for research. It was a fearfully sensual city, so much so that even the converts of Christianity were not wholly delivered from it. The letters of Paul reveal to us the fact that they defended their profligacy on the ground of liberty; the supper of the Lord was degraded to a drunken carousal; the feasts of the heathen still drew to them the Christian disciples; one of the members had contracted an incestuous marriage, and many of his

fellows condoned his wickedness. We are tempted to ask, If this was the condition of those who had been lifted up to a higher moral plane, what must have been the preceding life from which they had emerged, and which still clung to them with such attractive power?

With such a condition of morals, it would not be hard to infer what must have been the moral status of woman. When the literature of Greece was most elaborate, and when its civilization was at the highest, women were excluded from public affairs. Almost all their great men, not only so notorious a libertine as Alcibiades, but even Themistocles and Pericles were impure. Plato represents a state as wholly disorganized, where wives were on an equality with their husbands. He provides in his "Republic" "that the wives of these guardians are to be common, and their children also common, and no parent is to know his own child, nor any child his parent." Only unchaste women were permitted to attend public lectures and be on intimate terms with artists and scholars. In the true sense of the term, the Greeks knew little of family life. A Greek citizen was at home but little of his time, and sought his comfort elsewhere than at his own hearth. "Is there a human being," asks Socrates of one of his friends, "with whom you talk less than with your wife?" Demosthenes says without the least embarrassment, "We have *heterae* [prostitutes] for our pleasure, wives to bear us children and to care for our household." It is easy to understand why there are so few noble women in Grecian history, and why such prominence is given to those of unchaste life. The latter attended lecture rooms, wrote books, became the companion of statesmen, poets, and philosophers. Even Socrates went to hear Aspasia. While the modest but intelligent housewife sank into oblivion, the courtesan became the subject of history. "They gave themselves as models for images of the gods. Phryne, the courtesan who promised the Thebans to rebuild their walls if they would write on them in golden letters, 'Alexander destroyed them, Phryne rebuilt them,' served Praxiteles as a model for his renowned statue of the Cnidian Aphrodite. Thus the Greeks lifted their hands to public prostitutes when they prayed in their temples, and the extent of their shamelessness is sufficiently shown by the fact that this very Phryne, at the festival of Poseidon in Eleusis, appeared as Aphrodite Anadyomene, and having laid aside her

garments and unloosed her hair, descended into the sea before the eyes of applauding Greece." A daughter, at Athens, inherited nothing from her father. She lived in the strictest seclusion until marriage; after that she could not on her own account conclude any bargain. What a man did, even through the advice or at the request of a woman, was treated by the law as of no effect. At Syracuse, no free woman was allowed to go out after night except for adultery, nor even by day except as attended by a female servant. Her glory was in having no one speak of her. According to Plato, "a woman's virtue is to order her home, to keep what is in door, and to obey her husband."

In the Roman Empire this degradation of morals came more gradually and at a later period. The women who poured their ornaments into the treasury, or sent their husbands and sons gladly to endure suffering and, if need be, death, were especially esteemed. Nothing indecent was to be said in their presence, and their testimony had equal weight in the courts. A writer on farming, who lived in the first century, thus speaks of the home life of the Romans: "There was then the highest reverence, joined with concord and with industry. There was no division of interests to be seen in the house, nothing that the husband or the wife claimed to belong to either of them in their own right. All was looked upon as common to both." But there was another side to all this. The Roman family was based on the lordship of the head of the family, which embraced the power to sell wife or child into slavery, and to inflict on them death itself. As the true worth of the individual became known, women rebelled against this tyrannical power. They refused to be married by any of the old forms by which the wife passed under the power of her husband. They substituted marriage by simple contract, which either party might revoke. The rule by which a wife became a husband's property, if found among his possessions for a day and a year, was evaded by returning to their father's home for three days of each year.

This tended to a dissolution of social ties. It was greatly aggravated by the flowing into Rome of the riches of the conquered world. As luxury prevailed, chastity and modesty perished. Marriages were easily effected, and as readily dissolved. Inclination or affection did not seem to have much to do with the

matter. For the man, marriage was simply a financial transaction; for the maiden, it was the means of escape from the limits of the nursery and of becoming free. "There are women who count their years not by the number of consuls, but by the number of their husbands," says Seneca. The matron whom Jerome describes as attending the funeral of her twenty-fourth husband, must have gone even beyond that. They allow themselves to be divorced," mocks Juvenal, "before the nuptial garlands have faded." Friends exchanged wives, and it was not dishonorable to employ the name of friendship for the purpose of seducing a friend's wife. "Whoever has no love affairs is despised," said Seneca. "Not only did the theater and the circus offer opportunities for beginning and continuing amorous intrigues, the temples were not too holy nor the brothels too foul for them. It came to pass (a more horrible symptom of demoralization can scarcely be imagined) that ladies of high birth had themselves enrolled in the police register of common prostitutes, in order that they might abandon themselves entirely to the most wanton excesses." Children were a burden. Infanticide was not regarded as a crime. Mothers were more concerned about their toilets, or the gossip of the day, than the education of their children. Marriage fell into contempt, and a law was passed imposing fines and taxes on those who remained unmarried beyond a certain age.

Of course there were noble exceptions to all this. There were faithful marriages and good wives, but domestic life was dreadfully corrupted. Where lewdness and indecency had become respectable, the domestic virtues could not prevail. A dreadful picture of the corruption of the times has been given by the apostle Paul in the earlier chapters of the Book of Romans, and for every line of that frightfully dark picture, historic proofs can be adduced. "We know not which is the more shocking, the effrontery with which sensuality came forth, or the cunning with which it sought what was more and more unnatural. Even the temples promoted lewdness, the priestesses were prostitutes, and shameful to relate, this was esteemed and practiced by the heathen as a part of religious worship."

This was the degradation which woman had reached in the most cultured nations of antiquity, where art and literature flourished, where lived men of literary culture and power, where were

laid deep and strong the foundations of civil law. If this was her condition among the highest cultured nations of the earth, what must it have been among the more barbarous people? The worth of man as man, a worth shared by all, even by foreigners and barbarians, was a truth hidden from the ancient world, and which only came to light when Christianity made its advent. Where no true value attached to man as man, there could be no true appreciation of woman.

This is the low moral condition which Christ found when he came to this earth. As soon as the religion which he taught began to be believed and practiced, the position of woman began to improve. From that day to this, with here and there a temporary backward eddy, here has been continuous progress. Woman never occupied so honorable a position as she occupies to-day, wherever the gospel of Christ has been accepted. The record of history shows that the change began with the very beginning of his ministry. "Women had been his devoted disciples during his personal ministry on earth, among them the wife of Chuza, the sisters at Bethany, the woman who, because she loved much, had been bidden by him to go in peace. Women had been the first converts in Europe; Lydia at Philippi; the honorable women at Thessalonica; the woman named Damaris—another Athenian Magdalene she may have been—upon Mar's Hill; the Priscilla whose name is more than once placed before her husband's, as if to indicate a certain conceded and beautiful leadership in her genius and spirit. As soon as congregations of Christian disciples began to be formed in any proud and dissolute city, women began to be recognized as effective in definite and important ministerial functions. Salutations were addressed to them, epistles even, by the foremost apostles; and that faith which was afterward radiantly shown by their sisters in the spirit in the arena and at the stake, had been discovered and commended in themselves before the persecuting frenzies arose. The grandmother Lois, the mother Eunice, were remembered by Paul in his prison at Rome, when his chained hand could not trace his own words. The whole church, to the thought of the disciples, took the form of a woman, radiant and crowned, on earth and in heaven."

The effect of all this could hardly be measured. It would put fresh hope and inspiration even into the humbler classes. The

instructions given, the hopes created, the new ideals placed before women in the higher social ranks, led them to seek a new experience. Marriage became a covenant for life, in which she was freed from the dominion and power of the former severe law, and placed upon an equality with her husband. Christ's whole dealing with the women of his age was one of liberation; it was to free her from the bondage of a low ideal, and vicious life, and to lift her to the high plane which became the children of God. The position to which he thus assigned her has never been lost, and never will be lost until the end of time.

It is true the early followers of the Master were limited in their vision and did not come into that clear knowledge of woman's position which we have to-day. The age in which they lived was one of terrible wickedness. As the church made headway in the world, there was a disposition to mark the opposition of the Christian to the sensual world about him by outward signs. After a time a great value was laid on celibacy, and women were looked upon as an element of temptation rather than as co-workers in moral reform. Christian writers began to speak of marriage as required by human frailty, and the family relation as hindering our spiritual energies. Augustine recommended a universal celibacy. In the fifth century husbands and wives began to renounce each other in order to lead a monastic life. As the church lost its spiritual power in the early centuries, it yielded more and more to the influence of its environment. The Latin church went so far as to enact the celibacy of the clergy, and severed the marriage relation in the case of priests and bishops. What was thus intended for an uplifting force to bring mankind nearer God, actually drove men downward. It taught the common people to despise the ties which bound them to wife and children. There were no doubt good men among these priests and monks, and good women among these nuns, but after all, this was not the liberty which Christ came to give nor the honor which he placed upon the woman in the family and out of it. Woman's true place in the family must be found and kept, if we would preserve for her the purity and freedom which God gave her. We must break away from these perversions of the truth and these superstitious notions. This was done by one who had become a monk by his own free will, but who hated the system when he saw how it came

between men and God; how it unfitted men to bear rule in the household, the nation, and the church; who at forty-three years of age tore himself away from this unnatural life, took for his wife one who had escaped from the same bondage, and thus laid the foundation of the household life of our Protestant clergy. Even at this day, we can scarcely conceive the wonderful work he did in thus releasing woman from the slavery which a corrupt church was beginning to fasten upon her.

In spite of all this narrowing and restricting life, this was a vast improvement on what had preceded it. Even in these dark ages, women as teachers, mothers, abbesses, had prominent place and influence. They taught in the great schools that were established. They built churches, endowed convents, and opened their castles to the poor. Even in the days of chivalry, when the knight gave up his life to defend the weak and to champion women against their oppressors, he held before him a noble ideal which gave promise of a still brighter day. The tendency of Christianity always has been, while recognizing the sex in souls, to give to women larger opportunities and more effective control of all instruments for work, to put her side by side with man, in front of all the great achievements, letters, arts, humanities, missions; "as at the majestic south portal of Strassburg Cathedral the figure of Sabina, maiden and architect, faces the figure of Erwin of Steinbach, and though the old traditions of law are hard to change, the entire movement of modern society is toward the perfect enfranchisement of the sex, to which the religion brought by Jesus gave, at the outset, preëminent honor."

The emancipation which has thus been partially accomplished, and which will be more completely realized in the coming years, was not due to the fact that Christ prescribed any civil code concerning woman's sphere, but by the working out of a moral force which he introduced into the world. The foundations of the system of Christian ethics are, love to God and love to man; and this last embraces all of mankind, regardless of age, nationality, creed, or sex. Under this law those who are weak and helpless are to be special objects of care. Woman, who had hitherto been the slave of a masculine tyranny in the family and elsewhere, now became an object of special regard. New liberties were granted unto her;

new spheres of action, new opportunities for usefulness were opened up, and her character thereby became exalted.

Because of this, woman never stood so high as she stands to-day. She is no longer the absolute slave of her brother man, but in God's sight stands upon an equality with him. She has the same origin, the same general nature, is gifted with the same immortal powers, and destined for the same eternity. She is an individual, and responsible to God for that individuality. Old laws have been repealed, old customs changed, old conceptions modified, and she to-day takes her place beside her brother as his best friend and helper. The different avocations and professions of life are, in the main, open to her, and she may enter in and possess them. She may select for herself such work in life as her tastes and talents will warrant. The prejudices of the few are steadily giving away before the increased power of the truth. This has fittingly been called "the woman's century," because along all lines she has made more rapid progress than ever before.

The blessed present gives promise of a glorious future when the knowledge of God shall cover the earth as the waters do the face of the deep. Women to-day are occupying the majority of the seats in our churches. They are doing the largest part of the benevolent work of the church. They are actively concerned in the charitable and moral reform work of the day. Wherever the churches have opened mission fields, women have been the first to press themselves to the front, and have done the most efficient service. They are waiting, as soon as the way shall be opened, to enter into our political life, and to help clean the Augean stables of our corrupt politics. They are a wonderful force for good in helping to bring back a lost world to its allegiance to the King of kings. When he shall reign supreme whose right it is to rule, and when his truth shall enter fully into the lives of men, into the customs of society, and into the laws of the land, then shall woman occupy that exalted position for which God designed her, and from which she has been kept by a false public sentiment and by the ignorance and tyranny of her brother. *May God hasten the day.*

"The yesterday of woman is one long story of hardship, suffering, and wrong. Her year has been mostly winter, never more than May. In ignorance, rather than wantonness, has she been oppressed, and men have wronged themselves in wronging her,

and have wronged each other quite as cruelly as woman, oftentimes. But her to-morrow is full of promise and of cheer. She has everything to hope for, and nothing to fear but herself. Already the day of her deliverance dawns, bringing untold privileges and joys, with their duties and trusts. Let her prepare to meet her to-morrow, which cometh faster than she dreams, and even now flushes the mountains with purple and gold, and lifts the thick mists from the valleys and makes all things new."

Wanted—Women.

"Good women are God's sentinels; in the darkest of earth's night.
They hold with stout hearts, silently, life's outpost toward the light;
And at God Almighty's roll-call, 'mong the hosts that answer 'Here!'
The voices of good women sound strong and sweet and clear.

"Good women are brave soldiers; in the thickest of the fight
They stand with stout hearts, patiently, embattled for the right;
And though no blare of trumpet or roll of drum in heard,
Good women, the world over, are the army of the Lord.

"Good women save the nation, though they bear not sword or gun.
Their panoply is righteousness, their will with God's is one;
Each in her single person revealing God on earth,
Knowing that so, and only so, is any life of worth.

"Don't talk of woman's weakness! I tell you that this hour
The weight of this world's future depends upon their power;
And down the track of ages, as Time's flood-tides are told,
The level of their height is marked by the place that women hold."

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